

arden

Volume IX
Spring 2007
Columbus State University

Arden

Volume IX
Spring 2007

Columbus State University

Dedication



Dean J. Larry Kees

Dean of Students

Acting Vice President of Student Affairs

Thirty-two years.

For thirty-two years he has dedicated himself to the students of Columbus State University. Through his position in the Student Life Office, as a coach of the Lady Cougars Softball team, as Housing Director, and now as our Dean of Students and Acting Vice President of Student Affairs, he has committed himself to us.

To him, this issue of *Arden* is dedicated. It is a meager dedication to a man who has given so much, but it is what we can offer. For the last nine years, from inception to date, Dean J. Larry Kees has supported *Arden*. This ninth issue belongs to him.

Thank you Dean Kees. Thank you for your support, your loyalty, and your generosity.

Thank you from *Arden*.

Thank you from the students you have served selflessly.

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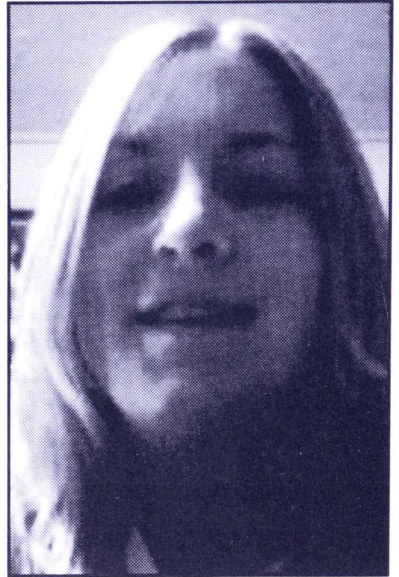
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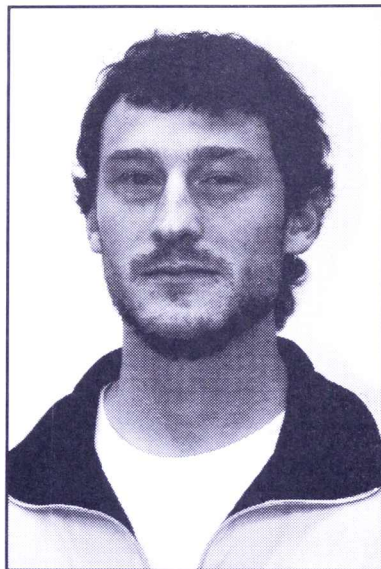
The Water Boils
Best of Poetry
Amanda M. Averett



*Persistent Devil,
Aren't You?*
Best of Poetry
C. Edward Watkins

*Named for Arden founder, John Kocian

Kocian Awards



Tokyo
Best of Art
Adam Forrester



The Man of the House
Best of Prose
Lori Hinkley

The Water Boils

Amanda M. Averett

Like failing paint, chipping rhythmic
in strict marching
intervals showing slowly what
is underneath,
it is a fumbling brilliance that
only happens
when no one is looking. Then the
water boils.

Persistent Devil, Aren't You?

C. Edward Watkins

a man the age of 26 found himself to be quite sick.
right when he was about to shut his eyes and die,
he heard God and Satan having an argument on high.
he took a deep breath, and right before his final lament,
he listened to how the balance of his fate was spent.

i got me a plan for this here man.
before he goes i'll have his soul.

you'll have his soul? that's real bold,
and quite odd, since i'm his God!

true, true, God, that's you,
but this man's a rebel, he listens to the devil.
instead of opening doors for ladies, giving to the poor babies,
and feeding hunger, he was content to be a selfish whoremonger.

true, old Lucifer, he did love the women, but that's just one blemish.

one's all i need to take him below, but if you need more here you go.
ten percent is all you require in order to stay safe from your ire.
this man chose one hundred percent to keep for his worldly desire.

that's true, old Devil. i guess that's strike two.

open your eyes and ears to hear and see strike three.
all these sins he did commit, yet not once did he repent.

STOP RIGHT THERE, YOU RED FACED SINNER!
HE HAS UNTIL DEATH TO REPENT, IF YOU REMEMBER.

as if on cue the man relented,
he asked for forgiveness and repented.
God knew the man's heart was true.
he forgave him and let him into Heaven too.

the Devil laughed and walked away,
but then he turned to say—

this soul you may keep today,
but somehow, someday,
i'll take me a soul to Hell to stay.

The Man of the House

Lori Hinkley

Civilization is birthed upon revolt by the hands of men and boys alike. Since the dawn of the first civilized community, men have been asked to bear arms against other men, equally as willing to give their life for the noblest of causes: bragging rights to be a member of the winning side. While men leave the comfort and easy familiarity of home to fight for the revolution-du-jour, children and adoring wives astonishingly have been able to survive, and dare I say prosper, in their absence.

I have to wonder about the exchange of raw unrefined emotion between husband and wife in those days, hours, and minutes before the soldier crosses the threshold of hearth and home into the vast desolation of war. I have to wonder if every woman throughout the course of history who has unclasped her husband's hand so that he may take aim against the enemy has found herself in a disgraceful heap of saline, saliva, and dreadful uncertainty upon his departure. But more than these things combined, I must ponder the thought of little boys too young to join the fight themselves bestowed with the burden of being the "man of the house."

I do not remember much about the days before my husband left to endure the hardships of America's current military campaign. I only recall the blunt force trauma of reality taking its shots at my young family, and a few Kodak moments that scroll brilliantly through my mind at times I let down my guard. These moments include the four of us—me, the soldier, and our girl and boy seated in our living room hours before the departure exchanging promises, vows, and pained glances. Our children, too young to grasp the impending finality of the situation, had each given Daddy a gift to warm his soul and to bring comfort in the grueling months ahead. My son bestowed upon him his very first medal won as a member of a fledgling soccer team. It proved to be the first in a succession of medals my husband would earn that year. Our daughter, exercising the penmanship of a three year old, wrote the only word she knew on a piece of paper and sealed it in an envelope: HUG. This alone would be able to carry him through the times when the light seemed to fade, and hope left him in its wake.

After this tear-filled exchange, we lay in bed, side by side—he, a stoic beam of breath and energy ready to brave the storm, and me, a collapsed mass of emptiness fueled by sheer determination to hold on as long as I could. Our daughter asleep, and our son vowing not to do anything of the

sort, my husband and I plodded down the stairs to make final attempts at “good byes” and “I love yous.” The tugging in the deepest pit of my stomach was equaled only by the tight clasp at the back of my shirt by our little boy.

The threshold crossing was quick, as it should be. The night sky, crisp and clear as is the case in the trailing days of Kansas winters, sucked him in to warm the spirits of those already waiting. He would be an authority figure to fifty men, most younger than he and inexperienced in leaving loved ones behind; but some were older, and still looked to his wisdom and strength as a higher ranking soldier burdened by the charge of making sure they each would be reunited with the American soil from which they sprang.

Door closed, the task of survival for the four of us now lay at our feet. There were no threads of dignity to cling to as I slumped into a miserable pile of sobs at the foot of the stairs. At this very moment, I realized that he would never be further away than when we stood on separate sides of our front door. In my mind, I had let him go forever. I never thought I would see the green glint of his eyes or feel the warmth of his hands ever again. Yet there was a spark of survival ringing inside me that I had not previously known. A light tapping on my shoulder that I had felt before, but never dreamt would come at a time like this. In all my disgraceful self-centeredness and musings on how I would get through the next year living in fear that I was already a widow, I never thought that I would find comfort and strength in a seven-year-old child.

In the months prior to a soldier's deployment, there are many seminars and classes that military spouses are “highly encouraged” to attend. This basically means that you must go, or else leave your spouse to suffer the consequences of your apathy. Popular belief among most circles of “spouses,” the politically correct label for all husbands and wives of soldiers, is that these classes are a waste of time—time more precious spent with our soon-to-be-depart soldiers. I attended every class, lecture, and seminar that was offered. If there was an ounce of information about this impending journey, I wanted to know it, soak it up, and own it. In actuality, I do not remember much of any of it. Most of the information came in pre-packaged generic statements meant to ease the minds of the weak. I would not call the information fabricated but a mere misrepresentation of the facts.

One lecture I attended was sponsored by the mental health division of a

hospital. Much was said about what to do if certain crises arise, and how to circumvent uncomfortable situations. The only thing I can recall from that seminar was a statement that seemed silly to me at the time, yet rang true when my moment of humility arose. The psychiatrist said that deploying soldiers should never tell young children to "take care of the house and Mommy while I am gone." In essence, do not allow the child to believe he is the new "man of the house." It is too much pressure for a child to take on such an adult role, especially at a time of fear and uncertainty.

We never said this to our son. My husband never told him to take care of things, or to take care of me in his absence. In spite of our efforts to avoid such language, and relinquish him the responsibility, he did not need to be told. In his eyes, he had never seen me more vulnerable and susceptible to fear than at that very moment. His instinctive ability to soothe the savage beast, his shattered Mommy, kicked in as he patted my back gently with one hand and held me close with the other. The hands, so small yet so significant, laid the road for my fears to subside and for tranquility to take over.

We sat there, the two of us, on the bottom of the stairs and cried together. The tears flowed easily, not in staccato spurts between wails, but free and effortless until there was nothing left to give. After the well dried, I collected myself and carried his tiny body upstairs to my room. As I lay in bed beside him, he rolled over, and through weary eyes and tired lips he whispered, "It's okay, Mommy. I'll take care of you."

Truer words have never been spoken. We made it through that most incomprehensible year. In my heart, I knew that countless women before me had endured much harder circumstances in the absence of their husbands. I knew that women were capable of keeping households in states of organized routine. I knew that times were hard throughout history, across cultures, and spanning hundreds of generations, and that I would not be the last to endure the pain of letting a soldier go. But I hoped that behind every woman like me, who found inner strength in the face of adverse conditions, stood a little man of the house to ease her aches and take care of her, even it was just a little bit.

Tokyo

Adam Forrester



The Cat Man

Gretchen Nevins

He walks down the dirty back street, parallel to the tall chain-link fence that separates the railroad tracks. Flanking the road on the other side are dilapidated buildings where the ghosts of this old mill town gaze through broken panes of glass. The street is littered with paper and empty beer cans and closest to the fence abandoned cars rot in the shadows of passing trains.

His back is hunched over as he ambles slowly down the road with a plastic shopping bag filled with dry cat food in one arthritic hand and a cane in the other. He stops intermittently to deposit a heaping of cat food on a white paper plate, hidden underneath a shrub or next to a group of metal garbage cans. His concern, knocking about his head like a snare drum, remains the lives of the stray cats that live hidden amongst the rubbish of this decaying town. He quietly chants, "Winter's coming soon." But a perpetual winter's already deadened this town.

Cleaning House Months After You Left

Obadiah Booker

When bending to pick up a piece of your hair
From behind the night stand this morning,
Souvenirs of you filter to my mind,
Like light trickling through half-opened blinds.
Half-askew and gray these tempered etchings
Yearn to create a semi-sick taste that resembles
The feeling of eating too much of a rich good thing,
Like gorging on chocolate. Your empty
Memory feasts on my sleep-impressed thoughts,
And as I wrap that golden strand around
My finger, I hear the last thing
We uttered in silence at one another,
Then I rise, walk to the trash-can,
And put you back where you belong.

Slat Boats

Sydney Lanier



A Shadow on the Water

John Phillips

Past smoothed crags of driftwood
and barnacle-bedecked pillars
on some black endeavor
a ghost slides over the water.

The metal detector lies in the sand
a shovel falls soon beside
hands struggle with the moonlit earth
fingers gray in the monochrome night

No ordinary driftwood,
a frame pulled creaking from the hole
lock still dragging from the edge, crusted—
on the water, a shadow turns its head.

Color returns to the night
as sand falls from the tarnished coin
that spills around the knees
at the edge of the wood, well above the tide

The muffled shriek of joy echoes
to sea, where hooded eyes rage
again it slides across the waves, shadowy arm raised,
the blade still bright through all these long years.

Success

Jessica R. McCallister

He sat and watched them walk in, their feet sticking to the concrete floor, crunching over the candy and popcorn remnants littering the walkways. From his perch in the right corner of the theatre, he could see the two doors. He stretched out, legs draped across the seats to his left, and surveyed the velvet sea below him. With each entrance, a crack of light broke the darkness for a fleeting moment allowing quick glimpses into the lives of the patrons. Often, they were hand in hand, or at least touching in some manner, unable to break the grip of their relationships. It was as if they all needed to touch and talk. The girls propped their heads on men's shoulders, whispered into their ears, nibbled on their necks. The men, in the darkness of the theatre, enjoyed every fleshly gesture from their companions and leaned in for kisses and laughs.

Once the film began, he kept watching. He waited for them to redeem the others. But they never did. They were always a disappointment. Always whispering, kissing, and moaning during the film's beginnings...always rustling off their coats, digging through food, or having one last conversation. They always missed it—always missed him. His one moment, his one chance for recognition was always in vain. It took him years to get on the screen, and they didn't care. Screen time...he only had two seconds... "Written by Harold Smith"...and it was gone, fleeting, fading to black...as they went on with their lives, completely unaware and, more importantly, apathetic and unconcerned with his work.

Harold Smith was a writer. He had been as long as he could remember. When his mother left the room, his father whispered inspiration of a life far away from the devastation and death around him. "Jest do what you want, 'en don't let no woman getcha down." Harold, with time, learned to drown out his father's whispers, and simply nod with acceptance, knowing all along that the pleadings from his father, in the end, wouldn't amount to anything.

Harold's mother was always imposing. She was beautiful with piercing yellow eyes and long, brunette hair the color of roasted almonds. In all his life, Harold had never seen her dressed down. Her chunky pearl necklace was fused to her neck, he believed, and the thin black watch on her right wrist seemed a permanent fixture on her bronzed skin. Her beauty, in all its powerful glory, was a façade. No matter what Harold or his father did, it was

always wrong in some facet of her imagination.

Harold never had friends and rarely talked to people away from home. He was too busy observing, a quality that was later attributed to his penchant for realistic writing. He remembered everything, and with each observance, his mind would immediately fathom a world away from his own.

At home, Harold was either in his small attic room or sitting beside his father in the den. The Harolds, Senior and Junior, would sit, side by side, heads cocked to the right, and gaze off into nowhere as his mother, Lula Jean, buzzed about. They had evolved a keen sense of hearing, and knew when to listen and when to watch.

One rainy afternoon, there was a knock at Harold's door. His father's head peeped beyond the crack. "How about some chess?"

They sat in the kitchen; it had the most light on power zapped days. After each move, Harold looked at his father. Harold Senior never looked up when he played chess. He said it showed weakness. His eyelashes fluttered, amplified by his Coke bottle spectacles. From years of marital nagging, his shoulders sagged down towards the table even when he seemed to be sitting tall.

"Well, get to it. Contrary to yer schedule, I ain't got all day," he mumbled while still staring at the chessboard. Harold smiled. He only smiled when he was around his father. His father glanced up.

"You know, Harold, I am proud of ya. Yer Momma says you ain't got no bidness bein' in yer room all day, but I tell her, I say, Lula Jean, let the boy be. Not that she listens, 'course."

Harold nodded.

"Now, make your move. My time ain't stretchin' none."

The front door crashed open, and in boomed Harold's mother. Harold Senior jumped. "Damn woman wants to give me a heart attack, I tell ya."

"Y'all better not be sitting around," she yelled. "Although I wouldn't doubt it!"

She clacked across the rooms, her heels snapping with each stomp. When she reached the doorway, she put one hand on her hip and smirked. "Should have known." With one swift move, she picked up the open chessboard and slid the pieces into the box, closing it in another move, and demanding work from Harold Senior. Through his lenses, he winked at Harold, looked at Lula Jean, and rolled his eyes with a sigh. Harold Senior walked into the next room with Lula Jean towering behind him pronouncing orders.

Harold had to escape. He retreated to the carport and hung his legs over its rough brick border, the roof's ledge sheltering his bare legs from the cascading water. Scanning the yard, he watched the pile of bricks stacked ever so carefully behind the house, remnants from when his father built the house years ago. Each hole in the bricks had a maze of spider webs, cautiously placed in the side-laying pieces for shelter from moments like this. While watching the windblown webs, the fern nearest the carport caught his eye. A caterpillar was holding on to a branch being battered by the pounding rain. Being the observer he was, Harold did not interfere. He watched. He watched as the caterpillar struggled to get near the center of the fern for stability, only to be knocked back and forth between dying fronds.

This was Harold's first short story. He lifted typing paper from his mother's desk and folded it in half, used a number two pencil for the illustrations and copy. Once he finished, he looked over it, at the thin sheets of careless print and partial fingerprints from pencil residue. He threw it away, stuck it deep within the trash so no one would find it. For years, Harold could remember every second of that afternoon, the smell of the rain and the feel of the paper, the disgust afterwards when he couldn't exactly reproduce his experience in words and pictures.

His continued attempts at writing didn't seem to amount to much of anything. Harold was never satisfied with his work, but he didn't know what else to do with himself. So he continued writing, and along with it, continued disappointing his mother, but more importantly, continued disappointing himself.

Life continued in the same saddening routine until Harold's high school graduation. Harold Senior died and, in all its solemnity, Harold found it a fitting goodbye. It was his father's way of telling him to go, and so he did. He boarded the first bus to Los Angeles the moment his father was lowered into the ground.

Twenty years later, after jobs hauling props to and from studios, Harold snapped. It was his twelfth year at the Twilight Palms Apartments, all of them spent in the same six hundred square foot studio apartment. At thirty-eight, he had nothing to show for his life—no wife, no children, no published stories. For years, he'd wandered the streets of Los Angeles, running after black luxury cars holding studio executives, hoping for the one chance to make his name in the world. It never happened.

Outside of his menial jobs, Harold's only liberty was going to the bar across the street from the Twilight Palms. The bar, simply named The Bar,

consisted of one rectangular room that stretched the entire length of the building with two rooms on the rear wall—a storage closet and a single stall bathroom.

In all his years of sitting at the bar, Harold had only made one acquaintance, a man named Donald. Donald was intelligent. He'd had two stories adapted into screenplays. Alcoholism does many things to people; for Donald, it took away all his money but twisted his mind just enough to produce fanciful stories the studios loved. He jotted down his stories onto cheap paper notebooks that he kept with him at all times. If he got drunk enough, he would show Harold his newest scene, but he hadn't been that drunk in over a year. Perhaps the alcohol was wearing down, making it impossible for him to actually become drunk. Instead, he measured his limit by the number of trips to the bathroom he took in any given night.

One dank evening, Donald stumbled off his wobbling stool and tottered to the bar's dingy bathroom. "One more trip, old man," he said, patting Harold on the back. Harold, who had kept his head down on the bar for most of the night, walked outside for a cigarette. The rain pounded onto the torn awning, creating a murky waterfall just outside the front door. Harold stood just behind the torrent. Through its clouded film, he could see the Twilight Palms. His lamp was on, illuminating the red curtains and creating an ominous beacon of light beckoning Harold home. He puffed his cigarette, blowing the toxic smoke into the world, before holding the butt beneath the falls and letting the torrent carry it to the ground.

Harold started towards home and stopped. He turned to his left and walked down the alley towards the bar's back entrance. The iron gate was locked. The rain battered his body. He found a metal trash can and stood it on its top, then used it as a stepping stool to get over the bar's protective fence. Jumping down, his foot landed sideways in a clump of mud and Harold fell to his hands. Aching, he stood and stumbled to the bar's cracked doorway. The bathroom was on his immediate left. Inside, Donald was staring in the mirror.

"Where the hell did you come from, old man?"

Harold grimaced.

"Didn't realize it would be so nasty tonight. Maddy's going to kill me. You know, Harold, I should be as lucky as you. Maddy—she just drives me—well, mad. Isn't that funny how things turn out? How did her ungrateful parents know she would turn out to be such an ungrateful bitch? Good name, I tell

you—or perfect coincidence. I hate going home.”

Harold braced himself on the doorway and leaned his head against the wall.

“Harold, are you alright? One too many, huh? I miss that feeling.”

Donald grabbed his notebook and stuffed it in his inside coat pocket. He stepped towards the blocked doorway. “Guess I’ll go face the firing squad,” Donald said with a smirk.

Harold moved inside the bathroom and closed the plywood door behind him.

“Come on, old man. Let me out first.”

Harold moved closer to Donald, eventually pinning him against the single stall. Donald’s eyes widened with curiosity and uncertainty. The mud dripping from his hands, Harold raised his arms towards Donald.

“Come on, Harold. What—what are you—”

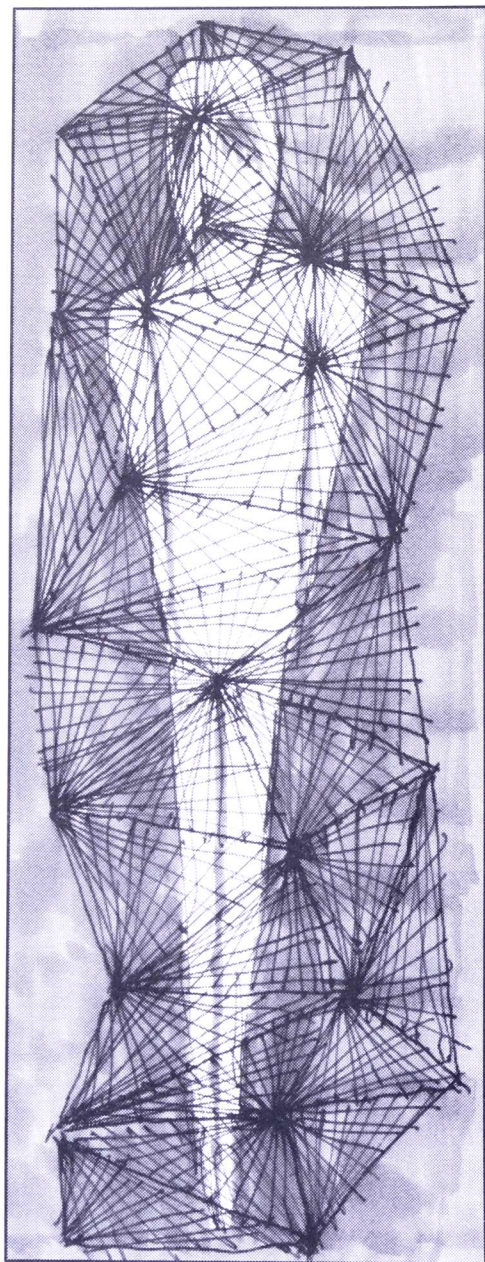
Harold put his slimy hands around Donald’s thin neck, tightening his grasp, his hands slipping. Donald’s eyes bulged. His face reddened and the veins in his temples increased. He fought, but Harold’s adrenaline, built up from twenty years of passivity, was too much to overcome. Donald gasped one last time and slid to the floor, Harold’s hands still clasped around his neck. Harold stooped down and looked Donald in his open eyes. He slid his hand into Donald’s coat and removed the worn notebook. He held it in his mud-soaked hands, flipped through the filled pages, and sighed with relief.

Nearly two years later, long after the swarms of detectives left and the bar’s patrons returned, Harold sat in the movie theatre waiting for his name to grace the screen.

The crowd continued to rustle and chat, as Harold mumbled to himself, “People have no respect for hard work.”

The Web We Wove

Franklin Lee Dillard II



Taste This Apple So Unfairly Cut

Sondra Lee

Taste this apple so unfairly cut.
Its shape becomes irregular as it's placed on my tongue.
It once was fully apple-round when perched on its tree.
Now it lies as a sacrifice on my plate ready to eat.
I gaze upon this apple green.
And I can't give it a name.
Does an apple deserve a name so pure to its taste?
This green gift from earth deserves more in its place.
If cut and not eaten immediately it gives way.
If bitten into and not appreciated it leaves us to think...
Shouldn't this apple have a name?
Shouldn't it be revered within our bodies as shown by Magritte
Because our bodies are just that: a home for someone other than our own.
All that the guest asks of us is to keep it clean and neat
—To wipe our feet before entering.
If not, our lives become like an apple cut
—Uneven and smooth all at once.
This once-perfect apple touched imperfection.
We hold the knife to its throat and offer another's creation.
No, the apple fulfilled its purpose; it gave its life.
And it tastes so sweet- green and all...what a delight!

God Through a Sea of This and That

Brent DeBique

God came to me,
He came to me in a straw hat.
He was
chewing spit
and smoking more cigs
than I ever thought about conjuring
lit.

He asked me several things,
several things about my dreams
and he made sure I thought
twice
about all those unforgivable things
I'd said I'd never take back.

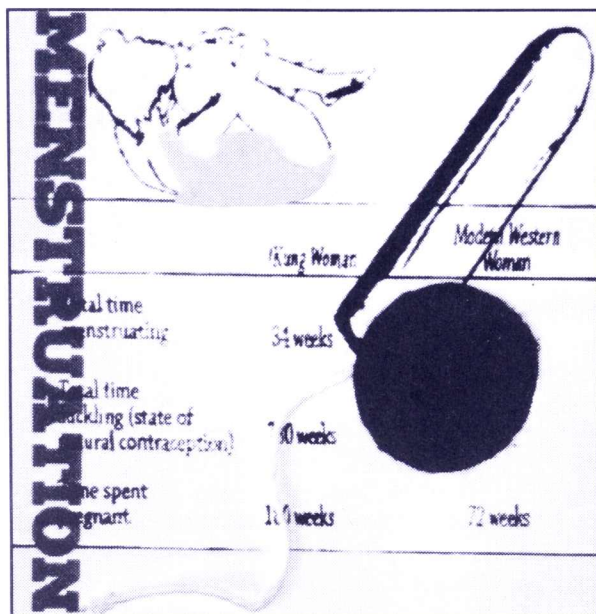
He came to me through a sea of
rusty cans
and half burnt matches,
and asked me how I felt about
all that—
all those who came through
with similar hats,
but never fit the match.

God came to me
and dutifully sat
next to my old bones,
and asked me not to pray
not to remove my shoes
nor my hat

but to just listen
and see if anything
in this world
could match
something like
that.

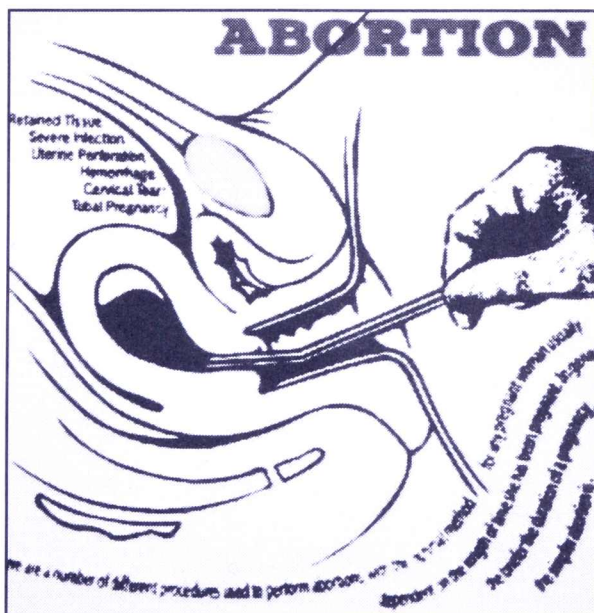
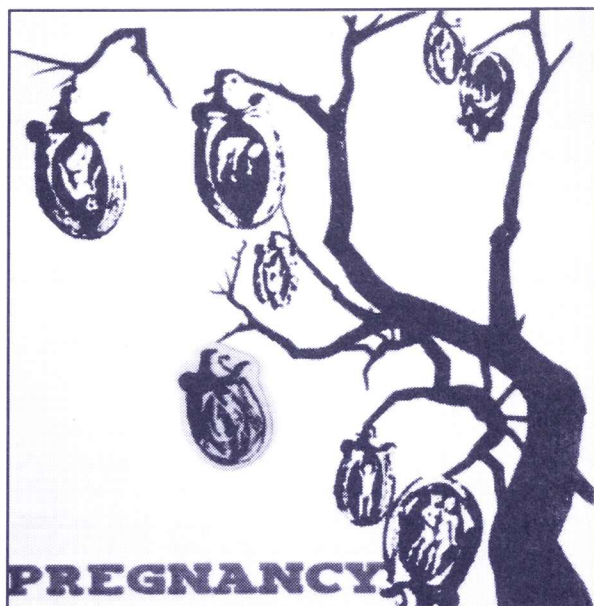
Untitled

Melanie Ross



Untitled

Melanie Ross



Mother of Perfected Rhythm

Shannon Williamson

Our skinny legs chopped the swelling water
cutting it into white sprays as we ran like little kids
not the gawky, early teenagers that we were, braces and all
falling, sputtering and emerging ready for more
not waves but foreign monsters, lapping up on hard,
concrete like sand on the secluded Mexican beach

When the noon sun had faded, the tide receding
we sat and watched and worshipped at its edge.
First one and then another returning to its sweet grasp.
Rolling, song-like sways, a benign rise and fall

Walking on the prickly coral at dusk
our bellies stuffed with almost burnt hamburgers
we examine a dresser, some trousers, a door
random whispers from others, lives we will never touch
mother of perfected rhythm, hold onto your secrets
in a wet, green, plant-drenched world

Newborn

Lori Hinkley

The beauty in a
Petal
Smoothness I have never known
Before you

A scent that lingers even after
You are gone

A concave existence that begs
a caress
to be
Touched
Cheek-to-cheek

The rise and fall
of your chest
a million tiny
clocks
Keeping time to the rhythm
of Petals
Falling from
flowers
a gift from the breeze

An Obsession with Numbers

Kristen M. Anthony

Looking back, she's had many experiences in her life. Nothing vividly stands out in her mind that doesn't involve numbers. Every memory she has, good or bad, is laced and intertwined with numbers. Be it the red numbers that flash as she hops on and off the scale, or the number of calories she religiously counts and allows herself to eat, she remembers them all. Every last memory in her mind has a number to accompany it.

Thirteen, 135 pounds, size six. She more or less began dabbling with anorexia. Unhappy with her pubescent body that was newly endowed with curves, she went on her first diet. She lost fifteen pounds quickly and almost effortlessly. On her last day of eighth grade she went into the school library to turn in an overdue book. The librarian, who had come to know her, smiled pleasantly and told her she looked great. "Did you lose weight?" she asked. This affirmed her need to lose weight to begin with and made her wonder how much more she needed to lose.

Fourteen, 120 pounds, size four, trim. She went to the beach with her friend and her family. Looking at the only picture she has from that trip, she sees two girls in two-piece bathing suits standing in the surf with smiles that light up their faces. They both have fair skin, dark hair, flat stomachs and skinny legs. Just a few hours after that picture was taken, they went out to eat and filled their bellies with food until they felt sick. Her friend jokingly suggested that they try and make themselves throw up to not feel so full. Giggling, they sunk to their knees on the porcelain tile and casually slipped their fingers down their throats. After a couple of unsuccessful tries, they both gave up and never spoke of the incident again.

Fifteen she hardly remembers at all. She knows she was a size four because that's the size clothes she was wearing, but she can't recall a weight. This would prove to be the last year for a long time in which she wasn't constantly obsessing about numbers; a calm before the storm. She experienced a strange feeling of disorientation and dissociation with her body that would last for years to come.

Sixteen, 133 pounds, size six. She had anticipated getting a car and a driver's license and all the freedom that came with it. She had wanted to get laxatives and diet pills for quite some time, and having a car allowed her to do that. She once again found herself at that all too familiar crossroads. She was disgusted at all the extra flesh staring back at her reflection. New and improved means were needed to achieve her desired results. Daily consumption of chocolate laxatives did nothing but make her gain weight.

Desperate for a way to lose the dress size she had gained, she turned to purging. She consciously knew before the first time she threw up that it was an act against God. At some level she sensed that purging would be a life-

altering decision, yet she foolishly chose to do it anyhow. What followed were days of food deprivation and then binging. At this point, she lost touch with reality.

Seventeen, 120 pounds, size four. Every pain and emotion was much less complicated when shrunk down to a number. Her life consisted of starving and purging this year. One day, she caved in and ate some M&M's discreetly in English class. Her teacher caught her shoveling the multi-colored candies in her mouth and spitefully said, "I don't think anyone in here is starving, so if you have candy, put it away." She jolted in her seat, put the M&M's away, and started to feel sick. She'd never felt so guilty and so unjustified for eating something. She cried after class. She was ashamed that she had eaten, much less gotten caught.

Seventeen and eleven months, 120 pounds, size four, clothes increasingly loose. She graduated from high school, and much to her parents' dismay, she fulfilled her longtime dream of moving out. She thought if she moved, all her problems would just stay behind and they wouldn't travel with her.

The house was only five miles away from where she'd been living before, but it felt like fifty. Moving into an empty house with no one to keep an eye on what she was eating was the worst thing she could have done, but she argued when anyone tried to tell her that. Her fantasy life, one filled with obsessively counting calories and weighing herself six to eight times a day, came true. She pondered every meal at length before consuming it. Every time she ate or drank water she got on the scale to see if anything had changed. Her parents were not there to watch her do this. Had they known what she had up her sleeve, they would have put an end to it, but they had no clue things were getting worse. She did a fantastic job of making up stories of fabulous meals she was eating, how she was definitely doing better, and how she felt just fine. Her friends who were over regularly saw the disorder get further out of control. One of them, in particular, took charge and hid the scale from her after realizing she was weighing herself all the time.

Eighteen, 117 pounds, size two, sick. In a period of six months she managed to lose another seven pounds, move back home, start college, and get hospitalized. As the leaves outside began to lose their color and die that year, so did her will to live. What little life she had at that point came apart at its seams. She quit trying to hide the fact that she had a problem. She stopped feeding lies to her parents and just stopped caring in general. She gave up on life, hoping and praying that the people she loved would give up on her too.

Eighteen and a half, 110 pounds, size zero. The size two, white, sleeveless dress she had worn six months earlier for high school graduation draped

her body with nothing to cling to. This was the first time she was positive she could see her bones through her skin, finally attaining part of her physical goal. Just after Christmas that year, her family increasingly worried, she was hospitalized.

The hospital stay in no way cured her, but it did teach her two crucial lessons that would leave a lasting impression, especially in the years to come. She left the hospital very much aware of two things: One, she never wanted to be in a psychiatric hospital again, and two, she actually had a choice to get better, she just had to choose.

Nineteen, 125 pounds, size four. Her diet was still very strict, she began to gain weight. Her nutritionist warned her that gaining weight was inevitable, since she had destroyed her metabolism. After years of needing to exercise control over her body, her body began to exercise control over itself. It stored every ounce of fat she put into her body. She was still purging trying to lose weight, but it did not work anymore. Slowly, very slowly, she began to make progress.

Twenty, size eight.

Twenty-one, size now in the double-digits. After her claims of being healed, and genuinely doing well, she slipped and fell. Stress consumed her life and she took it out on her body, again. There was no purging involved this time; she was past that. Mentally, she was healthy and knew that purging would turn right back to an addiction. She subconsciously reduced her meals to next-to-nothing. Six months and fifty pounds lighter, she still thought she looked fat.

Twenty-two, size four, genuinely happy. This was the first time she could recall being happy in the past nine years. Life came back to her heart and she realized her life was always going to be a struggle. Once she had this realization, the world forever changed for her. There were no more excuses, no more feeling sorry for herself. Her attention was on other things. Turning her focus away from her size and weight left her with no choice but to examine the content of her life a little more closely.

Twenty-three, confident. A decade has come and gone since her dance with anorexia and bulimia began. She's still very much aware of numbers, but they don't define her life. She's not foolish enough to say she's recovered, because she knows when you've suffered from a demon such as an eating disorder, you're never truly free. It's always waiting in the shadows, ready to suck her in when she least expects it.

Snow Day

Melanie K. Greenwood



Collectibles

Christen Anne Holloway



This Morning I Opened the Blinds

Bridgette Temmis

I awoke with your flickering, but intrepid heart an
impatient visage in my head.

This morning I opened the blinds.

My solitary enemies hemorrhage on my breakfast table
desperate rows of bright bullion,
venetian vertical vexes,
bleed through the kitchen window.

You glow gray in the morning.

You are yet another exasperation
that plagues the daybreak.

But you were nowhere to be found.

Unaided breakfast cold on the table.

A reluctant memory nearly exhausted.

This morning I opened the blinds.

On Sand and Asphalt

Melanie K. Greenwood

In the Pit of Her Stomach

Sally walked home from her usual hangout, stumbling and singing: Bud Light, Miller Light, Michelob Light, Incorporated. We're gonna drink it! Despite being off-tune, Sally repeated her song, snapping her fingers and bobbing her head along with her off-beat. She danced through her dark neighborhood. Nearly to her duplex she waved to Mrs. Johnson just as her high-heel shoe caught a crack in the sidewalk. She stumbled and recovered. Careful, warned Mrs. Johnson. Don't need to start working 'fore I get there. Two to eleven is bad enough without tending to my own. Sally giggled and hiccupped. I'm okay, Mrs. J! She yelled a little loud for the otherwise quiet neighborhood. The Johnsons' beagle howled in response. You don't need to worry about me going to your ER, Sally whispered. She took off her shoes and walked the remaining short distance barefoot. Sally made it into her bed, safe and sick to her stomach.

Damn that Last Drink

After about twenty-five cigarettes in about two minutes' time, I gave up. Poor sleep, procrastination, and parties no longer seemed like a good idea because I had to get that paper done. Thought it good planning though: academics and recreation all in one. Observe an event. Write about it. I remembered Dr. What's-his-Name saying something about observing something unfamiliar for an objective look at the world, but I decided it'd be easier to watch what I knew. I went to the bar intent on observing and not participating. But when you're watching a beer-bong competition and you know you can nail that bottle faster than that cocky jerk who always sits behind you with all the answers to all the questions the professor ever asks! Well, observation turns to participation, and that turns, well, you can guess, I'm sure.

It was hopeless. I could not write and I had to get that paper done. Didn't turn in the last one, and my grade was pretty close to bad. Determined to prove to Professor Whatever-his-name-was that I could be objective, I went searching for the standard hangover cure, aspirin and coffee, neither of which I had in the house. Digging through my purse and medicine box, to no avail, I returned to my computer desk. Again, I tried to write my objective observation about last night. Again, I failed. I threw my hands up into the air and let out the deepest, greatest, lung-collapsing sigh of frustration yet to be felt in my little hole-deemed-house. The force of breath rattled my stacks of paper. The breath circled the room, hit every wall, bounced across, then up to the ceiling, down to the floor, crept up and reentered my lungs, fresh but uninspiring.

I needed aspirin and coffee to proceed. Rising from my desk and walking to my door, where everything still lay from my late homecoming last night, I slipped on my jeans. Sitting down to rest, I stuck my feet in my ragged tennis shoes without socks—there weren't any close. I pulled on a little white t-shirt lying on the floor from who knows when and tied a jacket around my waist for safe measure. You never know what the weather will be like, or if the store will have the AC blasting. I wrapped a striped scarf around my neck for the cuteness factor; it certainly wasn't warm enough to be practical. I found a hat under the couch cushion to hide my knotted hair. Getting down on my hands and knees I grabbed my keys, wallet and cell phone, all of which had slipped out of the back pocket of my jeans and onto the floor, just enough under the couch to be concealed. Standing up, the rush of last night's last beer hit my head like that drop on a roller coaster ride that sends your stomach into your throat. I stepped out the door and locked it, allowing the creaking screen to slam shut. I considered making a contribution to the lawn decorations, but, without having eaten breakfast, there wasn't much to contribute. I spit on the grey concrete porch steps (spit, step, spit, step, spit) then walked down a long sidewalk that divided my front yard in two uneven sections. Down more steps, polka-dotted with more spit, I stepped onto 17th Street and turned towards Main Street.

After clearing the shady yard, I told myself, *When I've made something of this life I'll make a law against this much sunshine.* It made my eyes water and took nearly all the energy I had. The ball of blindness diminished my sight. The wind chilled my bare arms. The tiny hairs stood at attention. The little pimples made my arms look like raw chicken legs. My blood shivered. I untied my jacket and put it on. My disappointed mother's voice entered my head: Better hot than cold. My mother could drink an ocean a day and sweat two. It was because she was always hot. It always seemed unreal, unnecessary, but she insisted on pantyhose, socks, jeans, t-shirt, sweater. Smack in the middle of summer, too. It was like she didn't leave the Virginia winter with the rest of her family.

Lights and Sirens

Sally walked up 17th Street. She saw a flashing fire truck and an open ambulance parked square on the street in front of the Johnsons' house. They were wheeling Mr. Johnson out when Sally walked past. She could see his face; he wasn't dead. Mrs. Johnson wasn't home yet. There was no blood on the blue blanket, which covered him chin to toe, strapped across his body in

three places: chest, hips, knees. What's the matter? Sally asked Mr. Johnson. He's had a slight heart attack, replied one of the paramedics. Sally took Mr. Johnson by the hand. Commercials say you should take an aspirin, Sally offered. They gave me one, Sally, answered Mr. Johnson, in a weak voice. You'll feel better soon, Sally reassured him. Mrs. J'll be there to take care of you. Mr. Johnson shook his head and closed his eyes pushing a tear down his cheek. We've radioed. She's left already, said the same talkative paramedic. They lifted Mr. Johnson into the ambulance. Oh, man, Sally whined. And you guys don't have cell phones. The paramedics closed the back doors and walked to the front. Sally stood in the Johnsons' yard and watched as the fire truck turned to return to the station and the ambulance wailed onto Main Street for the one mile drive to Mercy Medical Center.

A Leisurely Stroll

I decided to walk to the corner bookstore for a "cup of coffee and an Atlantic" stroll. I knew Main would be busy, it always is, and was grateful for the wide sidewalks—big squares of concrete, squares wide enough for three to walk side-by-side. I know because we do it all the time. Every time we hit the first square on Main we sing from the Laverne and Shirley re-runs. We change the words to homage our favorite beers: Bud Light, Miller Light, Michelob Light, Incorporated. We're gonna drink it! The sidewalk is almost brand new and each is still separated by a connected crack, which hasn't been filled with dirt or litter yet. There is a gaping hole at the surface that is the perfect size for my Prada look-a-like, black leather, sling-back, all-purpose, four and a quarter inch heels to get stuck, pulling them off my foot nearly every time. That is if I stepped on cracks. My friends step on cracks. Their shoes get caught. I don't step on cracks.

All the old familiars welcomed my too early in the morning arrival, wretched and beautiful: a strip mall with a pub and grill that's really just a pub, the sheriff's office, a book store, a dollar store, a pawn shop, the grocery store, a drive-thru restaurant, the town church/school multiplex, and the food-mart/gas station on the corner. That bar is what ended me last night. It's totally a college place, even though there's not a college. At least not a real college, it's one of those two year places. If you can make it there, you have a chance of making it in a real U. But all the goners come back for weekends and breaks, and then it feels like a real college town. Drop outs come back for good and that's what maintains the town's population. And the bar's. Supposedly, the bar, it's eighteen to enter, twenty-one to drink, but, well, let's

just say I've been coming in here since long before I was legal. I can still drink like I used to, too. Age hasn't slowed me down. My friends and I had this trick to get away with our juvenile delinquency and we've passed it on to the next generation. Whenever Johnny-Law comes in, you slip out the back door, walk around the building, smoke a cigarette to rid your breath of alcohol and come back in the front. The doorman is still Laura's brother, and he lets people get away with it, but I think there's something in it for him. Not from me. Ever. Laura wouldn't let him near me. He cards kids in front of the police and the cops never double check him. I'm sure the cops probably know the real deal and just stop in to scare everyone off. I'm sure they do it just for laughs, and as long as no one causes any trouble, neither do they.

That sheriff's office is why I walk to drink. Public intoxication, I know. But wouldn't you rather have that than a five thousand dollar DUI? And I've found that usually you can get away with it—better safe than dead, my mother reminds me regularly. Plus, walking is more fun and less clean-up. Drink too much, need to be sick—bend over, baby, and let it all out. If you're driving, well, then you have to slow down, pull over, open the door, lean out—but not too far to fall out, this is when the seatbelt comes in handy—open wide and project as far out as possible, which is usually pretty hard because by that point you can't even hold your head up, much less choose the correct projection. Plus, with driving, you have to worry about getting chunks all over the side of your car. It's even worse if you can't make it and just have to go out the window. You don't want to clean that with a hangover. No sir-ree! Not fun. And that comes from experience.

The church looms over the strip. It's a Baptist place, so there's always some thumper out and ready to lecture "the dissenters." It's always busy, too, with meetings and services and the school. The school is always hopping with the future, but the sanctuary, that is the single most frightening place in the whole town. Why they put a Baptist church so close to a bar, I'll never know. I generally tend to pretend that church isn't there even though I have to walk by it every time I want to go to the book store. But that twenty-four hour foodmart, with a slushy machine and hot dogs, is one of our most cherished places. That place is our sanctuary. Those hot dogs have saved my life a couple of times. There is nothing like a bite of multi-flesh with lots of absorbing bread to make for a full stomach and an easier wretch. Beyond the strip is the bypass. It's one of two in town. It is our gateway to a get-away. We look to the bypass as the only way away from small town life. Every one of us is always talking about when and how we're going to get out.

It was near lunchtime as I was walking and cars turned in and out of everywhere. Big cars, trucks and SUVs. Clean cars and dirty. Walking by the school I got distracted. On the multiplex playground, with the background of a blue sky and empty trees, yellow grass and sand, asphalt and paint, several small children played. I forgot all about getting coffee.

Stopped in her Tracks

Sally walked to the fence separating innocence and experience. Her shoulders fell. She reached out to the chain-link barrier and grabbed hold. Her back slouched. Her head leaned to the right. A smile nearly surfaced. She sighed deeply. The smile spread, her cheeks lifted her eyes. Man. What a life. Being a kid, she said, to no one. Horns honked as lights turned green. Go already, echoed from one open truck window. Parents arrived to pick up their morning-session kindergarteners. Sweetie, hello! Mommy missed you, shouted a mother to her first born. Lunchers whizzed into parking spots. Glad you could make it, greeted a businessman to his client. Outdoor tables filled. Welcome to Town Grill. I'll be your server. What can I get you to drink? asked a uniformed waiter. Glasses clinked against glasses. Forks scrapped faux-china plates. Registers rang, change dropped. The world was silent to Sally.

Several Small Children Play

With a soundboard of empty trees and yellow grass, school children played on the sand and asphalt of limitless dreams. Uninterrupted, a lazy jet left a thin contrail across the blue vault of heaven. Several school children, mostly the boys, ran aimlessly without a coat. The uniform required the girls to don knee-length plaid skirts; some wore their socks up to meet, and they retained their coats. Classes were in recess. The week's spelling test was over. Their aim was to have a lot of fun in a little time.

The small voices reverberated into the distance. Balls flew. Ropes swung. Legs ran. Some of the bigger boys chased the smaller ones. Some of the girls huddled in close circles. The brave girls attacked the swing set, tucking their skirts between their knees. A group of three girls and one boy giggled through the classic playground game four-square. Their ball bounced through the laughter, rolled away, and gathered speed down the gentle slope of the lot. Three boys took position at the tetherball pole. They swung the ball fast and hard, one way, and then the other, and back again—trying hard to test each other. Their world spun ever faster—around...and around...and around.

Jump ropes circled round and round creating an outlined football as three

girls double-dutched, dreaming themselves the next world champions. Two more, swaying to the rhythm, waited patiently for their turn. Or not. One, growing ever impatient, joined the action inside the ring of ropes, screaming, "Ready or not, here I come!" The first jumper got distracted. She lost her momentum. She fell. Tangled. Scraping her uncovered knees. There was a scream of pain, surprise and outraged dignity. All went together with their injured friend into the building, helping her walk as a tiny trickle of blood surrendered to gravity.

They were undoubtedly going to visit the school nurse. She was quite used to these tragic playground injuries. Ready for anything, she waited with a warm smile and encouraging words. The sweet, loving nurse would surely secure the wound with a bandage and a kiss for good measure. Returning the girls to recess, she would leave them with the kind words, "Be careful," as she returned to her desk to wait for the next scrape or tummy ache.

The boys became disinterested in tetherball and picked up the abandoned ropes and began swinging them in the air. Their behavior was a test for attention. They wondered, with wild eyes, how long they could violently attack each other before being escorted to the principal's office. Their teacher, snapped to awareness by the assault, began walking quickly across the lot. She yelled for the boys' attention and cautiously approached the ropes. Playtime was over for the boys. The two ropes dropped to the ground and three boys were taken to face their punishment. Two participated, but the third boy would act as a witness for the principal. The others would hate him until their punishment was over. Then the friendship could resume.

The game of four-square ended and that group wandered to tetherball. Their game was far more civil than the boys' and each respectfully took turns. They gently tossed the ball around its rusty pole. The rope was fraying. The smallest of the girls played back, timid, eyes near closed. She feared the rope would break and the ball would fly off in her direction. She didn't want to be embarrassed. She didn't want to hurt her face.

Remember When

Sally and her little brother played catch in their backyard. The limitless dreams of childhood held her, made her; crushed her when they were crushed. Her Lab ran back and forth, following the ball, jumping to catch it, steal it, and run to the back of the yard. Don't throw it so hard, Sally demanded. Don't be such a girl, her brother commanded. Play nice or go to your rooms, Mom screamed. Mom had a headache, again. The dog hair wasn't

helping. The children's bickering intensified the pain. Sorry, they shouted in unison. You will be, Mom resounded. Ball and gloves fell to the ground: in Mom's way, not put away. Their mom poured a drink. Sally and her brother disappeared around the corner on their bikes. Their mom turned on Matlock and fell asleep in her chair.

Everything in Its Place

The teacher returned to her outdoor post from the principal's office. She was escorted by the double-dutch girls, all six laughed and enjoyed the company. No more tears fell. The wound had been covered. They told their teacher what she taught them in class. They tried so hard to be good, unlike their classmates who probably received one week without recess for their rowdy behavior.

Suddenly the volume of voices ruptured into chaos. The older children rushed onto the playground. Their morning classes were over. It was their turn to dominate the asphalt. The intrusion onto the lot frightened the younger children. They dropped their activities mid-swing and stared. They anticipated the big kids taking control of their game and stood willing to submit. Some ran, volunteering the ropes and tetherball to the older children. Others slowly resumed their game with one eye out for a big kid to demand they abandon their play. The little ones hated being brushed off the playground. Soon the recess would be over and they would return to the safety of their classroom. Until then, they sat along the edge, intimidated. Only able to watch the big kids take over.

The girls swinging on the swing set did not budge. They were the brave ones and would protest their removal from any piece of playground equipment. "We will not get off," remonstrated from their bellies. They were there first, and for the moment the swings belonged to them. Today contention was avoided. The big kids were not interested in swinging. It was more fun, in that moment, to watch the little kids run from them. The brave girls swung, concealed by their confidence. One big kid did notice. He leisurely walked over to the swing set, watching for the little girls to jump and run. They did not run. He stood there for a minute then surrendered and turned away. Without his friends there to back him up, the girls won. Next time he would surely gather up some friends and approach the swings with childish authority, demanding the swings be turned over.

Rrrring, ...ing, ...ing, ...ing.

Recess was over for the little kids.

The big kids did not notice the bell and continued their play.

The teachers moved toward the doors, stood patiently, watched their watches and waited for their students to gather their ropes and balls before lining up, single file.

The big kids started a game of kick ball and didn't bother the little ones who were trying to gather their play toys. The kids who took off their coats ran to the grass to pick them up. Everything was returned except one ball. The groundskeeper would find it later and return it to the classroom. No one would get in trouble. It would not be lost forever.

Finally all the children made their way to the doors and lined up to count off. They proudly claimed their place in line.

"One."

"Two."

"Twenty-three."

The teachers turned and led the way to learning.

Through the Sun's Reflection

Sally released the fence. She turned towards home. Sally rounded the corner from Main to 17th Street. She stepped into the gutter, in between parked cars. She stepped out and started across, placing her feet only on the white painted lines. The little green man stared at her from his little black box, arms raised and legs spread in mid-jumping jack. Sally could hear a car vibrating up the street, thumping over potholes. The little red man started to flash at her. She could hear the car before she could see the car. It needed a new muffler. The street needed to be repaved. Sally considered this inconsiderate; the car was too loud, the potholes too big. The smell and the sound of exhaust were, to her, total pollution. The little red man stood at attention. The nerve, she mumbled as the car approached the intersection. The driver honked. Sally stopped in the middle of the street and stared at the sun's reflection on the car's windshield. The driver honked again. Hey! You stop for pedestrians in a crosswalk. I have the right of way! Sally yelled. She stood there long enough to make her point and continued towards home. Mrs. Johnson didn't make it back to the hospital in time to kiss her husband goodbye. She stayed until her next shift, making arrangements.

Mad Hatter

Kelly Johnson



In Mad King Ludwig's Castle

Joseph Francavilla

I waited for you
in King Ludwig's Neuschwanstein Castle
with the tour you left
to seek Wagnerian splendor
hung and painted on the walls.

Like the busloads of Japanese visitors,
cameras slung round their necks like weapons,
who mirrored your touristy desire
to imperialize this fairy-tale Rheinland,
you snap, snap, snapped
away in maniacal obsession
and then were off on a crazy quest
to slay St. George and the dragon.

When the first tour left
and you didn't show,
I fidgeted and looked down the empty halls.
When the second left,
I grew mad and remembered
Da Vinci's saying in his notebooks:
"When you are all alone
you are all your own."

Near the Throne Room without a throne
I stared at the three-dimensional
golden foot of a cherub,
jutting out of the painted, heavenly ceiling
(which the guide ignored)
and then the Grotto—
once complete with waterfall and colored lights—
carved in the wall.

"He was called 'Mad Ludwig,'" the guide told us.
"He was a bad king," the guide said,
"and squandered the people's money
on his wild lunacies."

You finally join me—
out of film, breath, and money—
with the third tour.
Before the delirious vestiges
of deranged chivalry and mock-medievalism
we stand transfixed and dizzy.
We gape with vicarious wonder
at his sublime madness.

Wrong Place, Wrong Time

Jason Richardson

Now you have to listen to me. It wasn't my fault. I just happened to be at the wrong place at the wrong time, honestly. I can prove it. Just listen.

That night I'll admit I was a little tipsy, but only a little. Not enough to mar my judgment or skew the world as I saw it. Nothing was spinning, at least not yet. So I left the club, feeling calmly ecstatic since resting in the breast pocket of my red button down was the number of a real hottie. I mean, she was drop dead gorgeous. Black satin dress, chestnut rivers of flowing hair, and striking blue eyes were what she flaunted, making all within viewing distance aware of her every feature. She was hot enough to make even a happily married man of twenty five years fawn over her as if time had rewound itself, taking him back to the days of a high school teenager drowning in a sea of hormones.

But enough about her; this is about me. I left in my red button down and black slacks, her phone number safely tucked away, and while I leaned on the wall of the establishment, I called a cab. Even though I wasn't smashed out of my mind, I knew I'd be much safer in the hands of a sober driver, and being that my friends were either drunken beyond all recognition or already gone, it presented itself as my only option.

And it was then that he staggered into my life, the wino with a slight limp. In the meager lighting, I could ascertain little of his features besides his dingy threads and scraggily gray hair, but some details made themselves very apparent. His limping leg was stained red with blood; his hands were drenched in it, and flecks of blood dotted his wrinkled visage.

My first guess was that he had gotten in a drunken fight but that was until I caught a glimpse of those hardened brown eyes. They contained such a determination uncharacteristic of your average hobo that I instantly tossed that theory. Then I came up with my second conjecture: did he attempt to steal some crack off a dealer? But I was given no time to speculate, for at that moment, he saw me.

Now when I say he "saw" me, I don't mean he merely glanced in my general vicinity and went about his merry business. Those cold, soulless pools of hazel fixed on me, studied me, as if he were some noble predator ascertaining whether or not I would prove to be worthy prey. And then he came after me.

Naturally, I was scared shitless. I bolted down the other end of the alley, more sober than I would liked to have been at that moment. Now, I'm no professional track star, but I figured an old wino with a wounded leg and a limp wouldn't be able to effectively give chase, right? How wrong I was. I was barely thirty feet from the club's entrance before he pounced on me. The bastard F'ing pounced on me! Like a tiger or some other great beast of the wild. I yelped and rolled, trying to toss him off me, but the drunk was a tenacious little man, and he fought me with every fiber of his being. He clung to fistfuls of my shirt and bleached hair like a demented chimpanzee, and his movements were about as erratic as one as well.

After fighting him for as long as I could, I gave in. I just couldn't fathom how it was possible for an aged wino to have so much power and endurance in him, but I figured since he had no weapons on him, he couldn't possibly cause me any permanent damage. Once he had me on my back, however, things went from strange to worse.

He bent low, low enough to place his foul mouth full of rotting bicuspid next to my ear, and whispered something even fouler than his breath. I say "something" because, to be honest, I had no clue what he had said. But somehow, I knew it was dirty. Dirty beyond measure. And not of this world. Then he rose, only to dive at my neck with those rotten chompers.

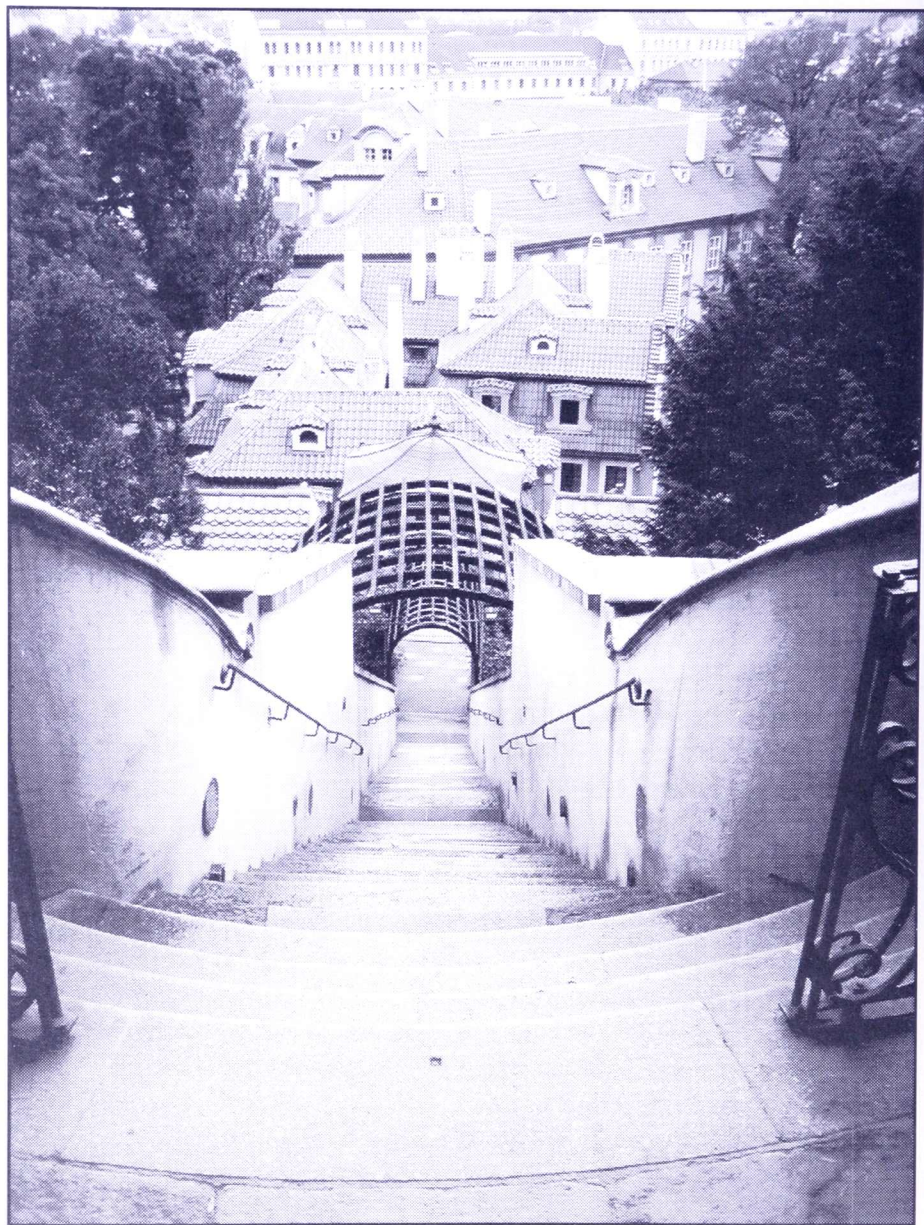
I hesitated no longer and pulled my butterfly. Three quick jabs to the chest and one to the throat rendered the wino lifeless. I shrugged the limp corpse off me and stood, only to find my cabbie dialing hastily a number I guessed all too well. But I stayed where I was. Then you showed up. And here I am.

Now I'm not saying whether or not I'm guilty of murder, or whether or not that old wino was an intergalactic drunk, but I think an autopsy might have some answers for us. And even if it doesn't, how else could you explain what happened? How could someone as wasted and haggard as he outrun a man in his prime? Or wrestle someone almost double his size into submission? And what he whispered, despite being a famed linguist, I know it to be not of this world. I tell you officers, there's too many mysteries out there, and I'm tired of guessing.

Now if you'd kindly return that number I mentioned earlier, I'd like to make my call.

Walkway Down

Charlene Hatch



Pilgrimage

Amanda Kite

I journeyed to a cabin in the woods
With hope to ease my mind,
And clear the clouding in my soul
Beneath the mountain pine.

Twas here I found a solemn spring
In which I cast my care,
And watched my burden flow down stream
Wondering how it'd fare.

I followed the bundle with my eyes
Until no longer I could see,
The tiny burden once so large
Washing far from me.

There was no time to protest
My feet moved too fast;
Carrying me along the bank
To where I saw it last.

My legs did fly around the bend
My package to retrieve,
And replace the burden on my back
Where before it'd cleaved.

Now whole again I feel more empty
Than when I'd first begun;
Twas not the time for letting go
Ergo I journey on.

Cul-de-sac

Lori Hinkley

I did not know your name until I read it in the obituaries.
My mother gave me the strange habit of reading the deads' announcements
of their passing when I was little.
She used the Paper every morning to convince herself that she wasn't dead,
and she, indeed, had to get out of bed.
I remember how she would "Aaww..." when she recognized one of the
names
in the death columns.
She worked as a geriatric nurse,
The "Aawws..." were frequent.

I always felt sorry for her—knowing so many dead people, and all.
I wondered what it felt like to know someone who was warm,
fleshy, and full of oxygen one day,
And memorialized in black and white the next.

You didn't have a picture like that, Ashley. I think your tiny, lovely, pea-pod
face would shock the morning coffee drinkers and remind them too much of
their own mortality.
You were two.
I live(d) down the street from you.
I didn't know your mommy.

I saw the men carry your dripping, limp body through the front yard to the
ambulance.
They moved in slow motion...but swiftly. That Sunday morning was bright
and lovely,
perfect for a swim, I do agree.
Your tiny body was as flaccid as a doll. Your hair, wet and long.
Your arms wilted, and desperately tried to cling to soil beneath you. You
looked the same as my daughter
when I carry her to bed on Friday Fun Nights after she has collapsed from
exhaustion
on the living room sofa.
She hangs like that.

Your mother followed the strange men who were cradling you like they were
taking you to your bed.
She collapsed from the weight of pain and guilt—fell flat onto the ground
Prostrate and screaming.

Every ounce of strength she could muster from the very depths of her body
where you once were seeded to life rose up in her throat and came to the
surface

Bubbling out

Shrill

Blood-curdling screams.

It should have awakened you.

Nothing...

NOTHING in the world is more heart-wrenching for a mother to watch than
the collapse and desperation of another mother who has lost a child.

Flesh and bone left crawling and writhing

Searching for a meaning.

Finding nothing.

My own mother's "Aawws" rang in my ears and danced with your mother's
caterwaul,

and the sound of sirens.

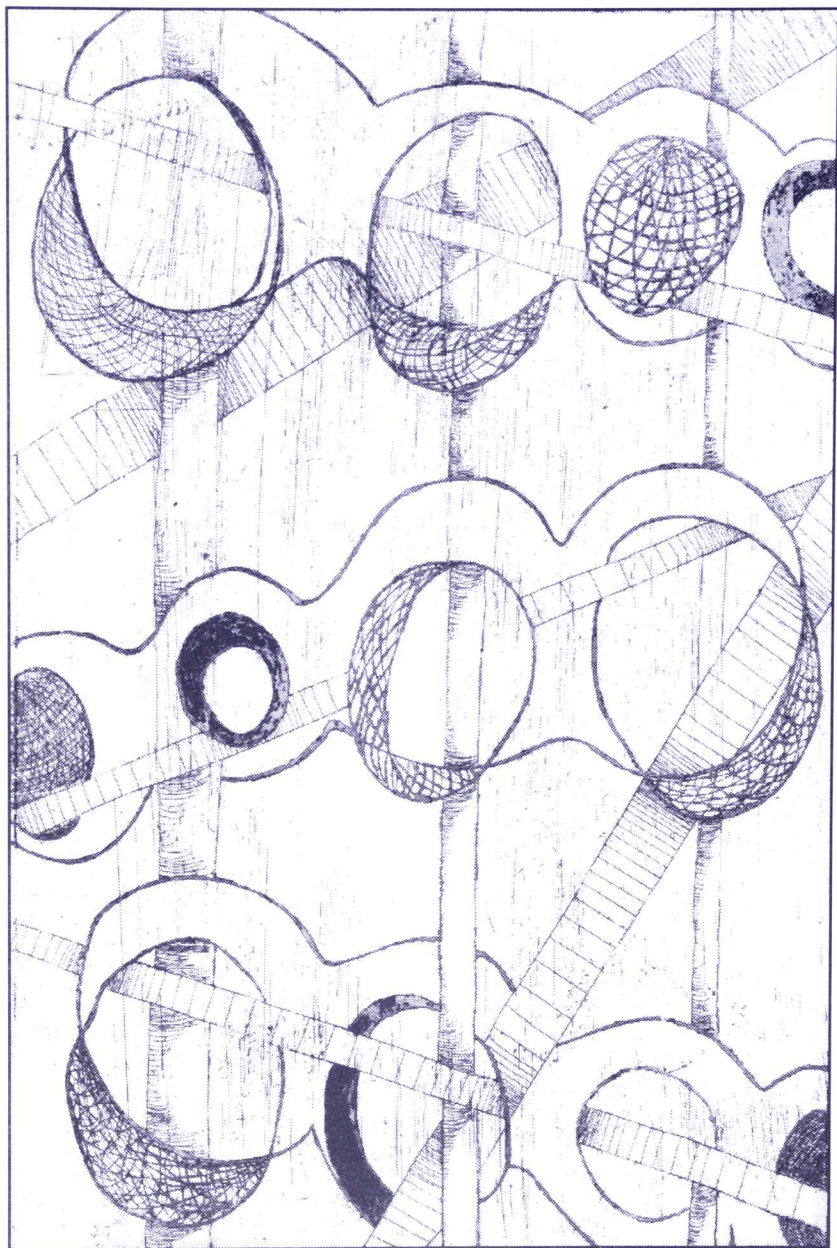
I no longer read the obituaries.

I know I am alive every morning by the pounding of blood in my ears,
the feel of air on my toes.

The soft steps of a little girl coming down the hall to whisper me awake with
"Mommy."

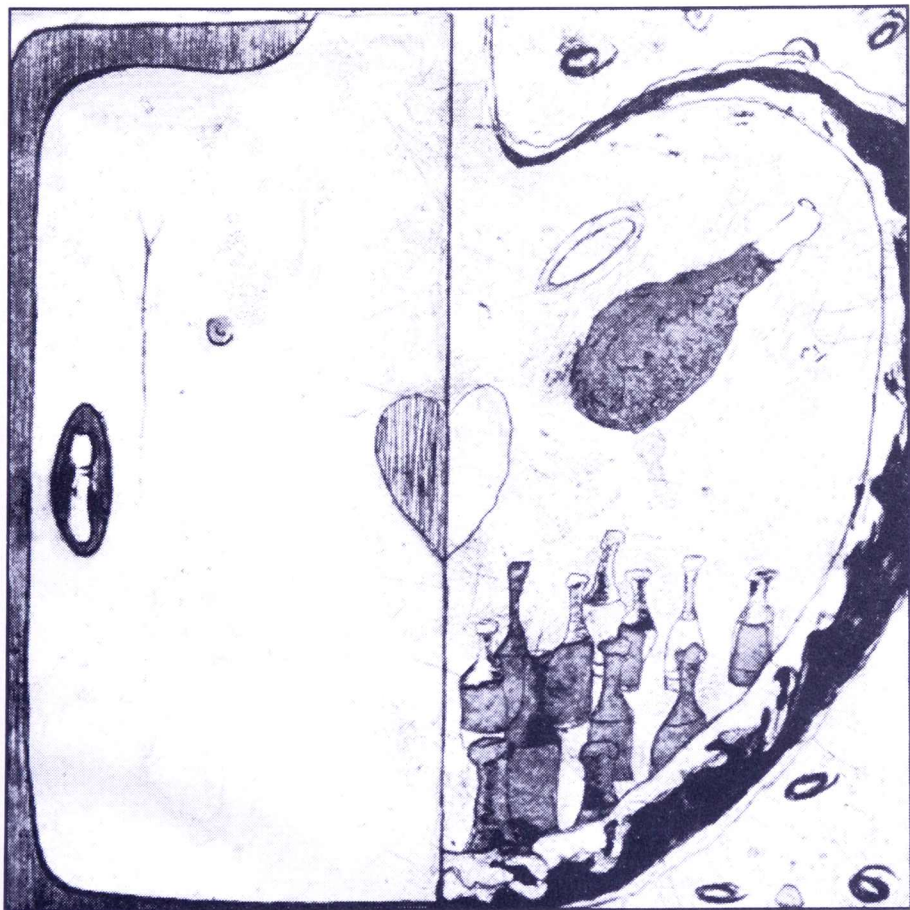
Untitled

Cassandra Lagmay



Untitled

Cassandra Lagmay



Freud in the Fun Park

John Phillips

Climbing woozily from the teacups, checking, rechecking
his glasses in the inside pocket of his immaculate white coat,
He would seek the comfort of daffodils by the side of the path,
and pick one, holding it gently,
Languidly regarding the windblown sundress of a costumed mouse,
with a grandfatherly, sly smile.
The place would press his thin shoulders low, soften his beard,
amidst the great machines and mighty trees,
Where, after failing to sink a single hoop, he would leave the midway,
sinking amidst the great coils of throbbing rides,
He would carry his cigar, as yet unlit, past the painted mushrooms, the towers,
feeling that perhaps it was not his time,
Until, standing at the darkened opening to the Haunted House,
he would slowly light up, and, bringing it to his lips,
enter, proudly ablaze.

Step Right Up

Melanie K. Greenwood



The Rosary Egg

Jessica R. McCallister

Hollow plastic eggs: treasure chests for children. At any given moment, in any given grocery store, one can find a beaded necklace, gooey putty, or a tattoo inside of them. It was a surprise to me, then, to find a holy symbol twisted into a ball and crammed into a clear egg.

Standing in the courtyard of an ancient church, I looked at the blue sky and the juxtaposition of the church's burnt umber brick against it. Children ran, disrupted the eating pigeons, as they yelled in various tongues. At fifteen, I was in a foreign country, with no clear view of myself or the world around me. I went to Spain with my high school, and because true maturity (the emotional kind) had not fully set in for the majority of my travel mates, most of us had no appreciation for the beauty and history of the world outside of South Georgia. I don't remember the name of the church, or even that of the Spanish town. My mother's pleadings for a travel journal were shrugged off, and of course, I regret not keeping one.

After the silent self-guided tour of the church with no name, I retreated to the courtyard and, for some reason, felt compelled to purchase a rosary. An overweight man sat behind a tall counter in a crowded kiosk near the church's exit. I entered with my mother, carefully perused the varied merchandise, tried not to break anything with our matching backpacks. Strangely, it was like a concert venue's cheap memorabilia table, but here, the star was the Virgin Mary. There were tall votive candles, wall hangings, and playing cards. As a teenager, I already sensed something a little off-kilter about the selection. Regardless, I resigned myself to one of the hanging rosaries. I pointed to it, and the sweating man nodded before handing me a plastic egg with a dark clump inside.

Soon after, we were called back to the tour bus. I sat in the front beside my mother, put in my headphones, and cracked open my rosary egg. The necklace was sealed inside a stiff plastic bag, and once I ripped apart the barrier, a unique scent emerged. It was a mixture of dirt and exotic spices, a scent I couldn't place. I examined the rosary, its silver embossed Virgin, and the intricate crucified man dangling from the bottom.

We rode for hours through the Spanish countryside. I peered out the window at the oranges and reds of the dry sand, and the stubby bushes that scattered the landscape. To the background of Sarah McLachlan's *Surfacing*

album, I watched the passing world as I held the aromatic beads in my hand. The uninterrupted landscape, the haunting music, and my new treasure beckoned an examination of my spirituality.

I grew up an only child to a single mother, and because a stay-at-home upbringing wasn't feasible for my mother, she arranged the next best thing: my super-religious grandparents would keep me daily. People joke that in the South there are two religions, church and football. My grandparents don't watch football, and so they compensated for it by doubling their church lives.

Church was a several nights per week duty. Yes, I began to think of it as a duty. The Brown Springs Church of God is the epitome of fire and brimstone. Imagine missing a Wednesday night service and getting the evil eye by the twenty-something members of the congregation the next Sunday. It was like entering a firing squad. I grew into a casual churchgoer with my own ideas of religion and spirituality. My grandparents didn't appreciate it too much.

On the crowded bus, I remembered these things, and watching the pure world outside, I understood my beliefs. It was a moving experience for me, especially at fifteen. The beauty of the world, with its varying formations and views, was spectacular. I never felt closer to myself, to the soul that makes me who I am.

Returning home, I was changed. Before going on a multi-country voyage, I thought the only satisfaction I would get out of the trip was a bragging point, an impressive travel destination to bring up in conversation. That was my teenage self. I can't say I returned a mature woman, but I did return a more complete young lady.

I still have the burgundy rosary, and it still faintly exudes its unique scent. Since I returned, it's been a fixture of my car's rearview mirror. Every morning, I rub it and say a quick prayer for the day to come. It's not a Catholic custom, but it's my custom, and that's good enough for me.

Fade To Black

C. Edward Watkins

Before you flip that switch,
just listen to me.
It's true, I committed those crimes.
But nobody wanted to hear my
side of the story.

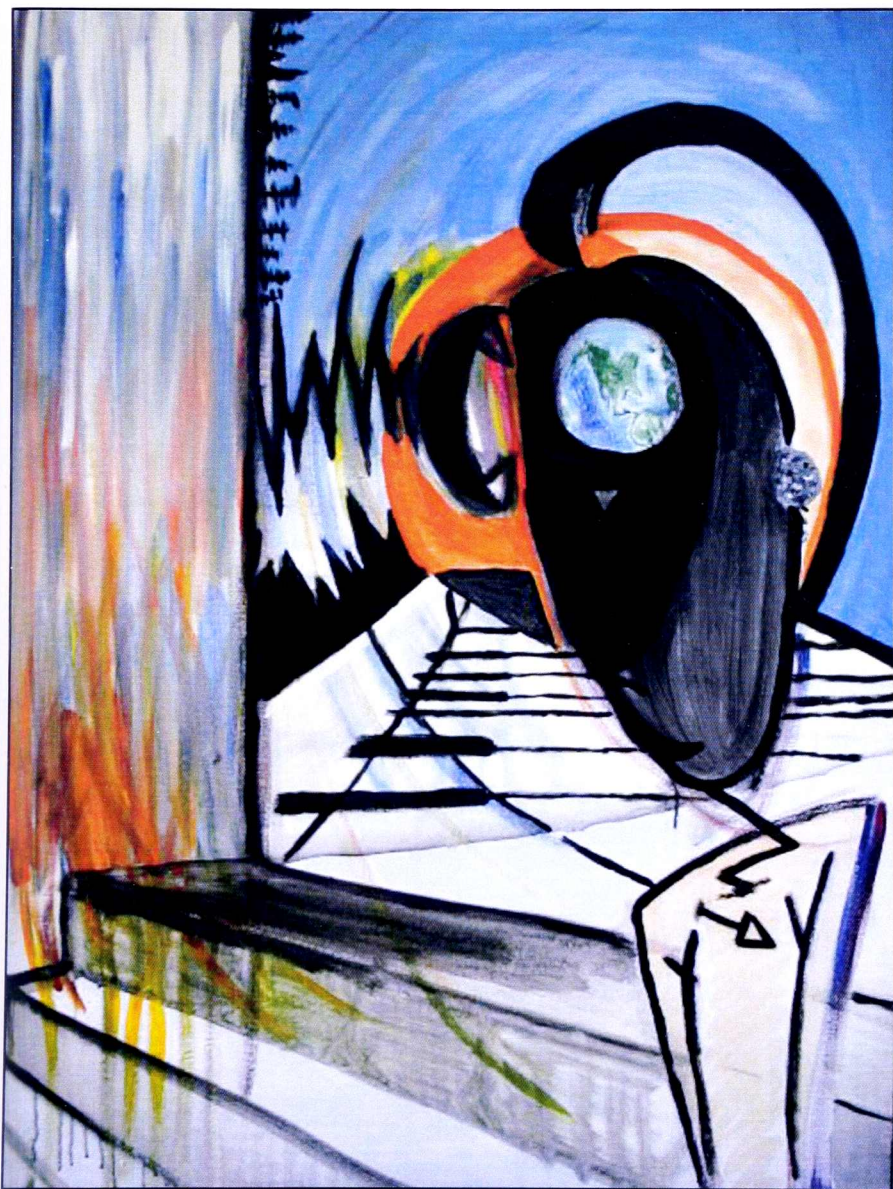
My mother died when I was
5 years old right in front of me.
My father blew her brains all
over my Pooh Bear pajamas.
Then he held me in his arms
really close, so close I could
feel every frantic breath he took.
He whispered—
"That bitch'll never cheat on us again."
Then he took his 357 and splattered
his grey matter all over my
pre-school playgroup face.

When I got older I had no
concept of love or trust.
When my woman cheated on
me, I took matters into my
own hands just like my
Father—
I killed my kids too.
I didn't want them
to grow up like—
I did.

I think
I did
the right thing.
If you think
I was wrong,
You go ahead and
You flip that switch.

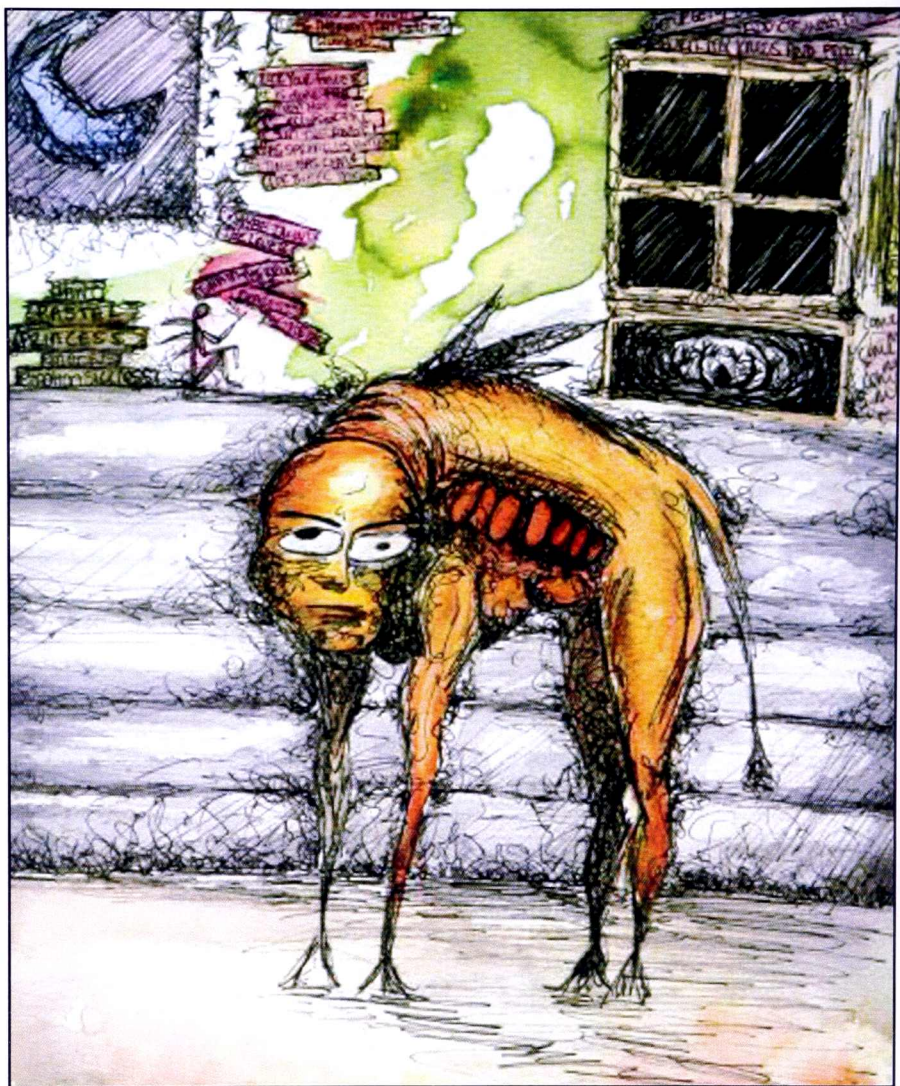
Celestial Harmonies

Franklin Lee Dillard II



Rondal

Rushton Elliot McHugh



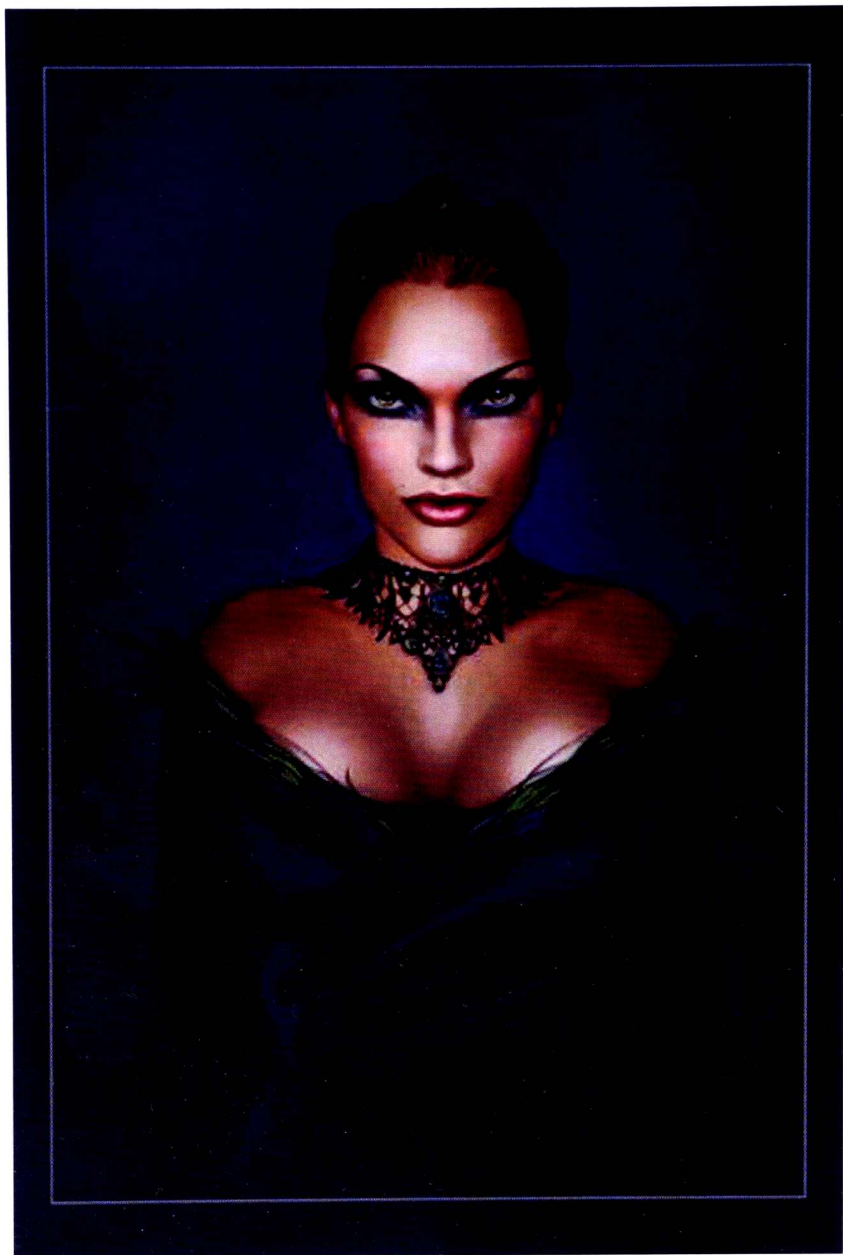
All the Silly Pig Wanted Was a Haircut

Denis Tricoche



Sapphire

Kelly Johnson



You Can't Sleep through Every Storm

Amanda M. Averett

I tried hard not to raise an alarm.
All I wanted was to close the curtain,
but you can't sleep through every storm.

When you slipped and we first lost our form,
I clung tightly to a word I found written in fleeing sand.
I tried hard not to raise an alarm.

I opened the door and found the mess on the floor.
I cleared the debris and heard your reasons,
but you can't sleep through every storm.

When morning pulled itself up, clean and warm,
it made me sweat and baked me thin.
I tried hard not to raise an alarm.

I watched you grope blind like a worm.
Your eyes writhed through a speech plainly spoken,
but you can't sleep through every storm.

And when the flood poured and it all came in a swarm,
your arm cramped and shrank when I showed my hand.
I tried hard not to raise an alarm,
but you can't sleep through every storm.

Revive My Old Affection

Melanie K. Greenwood

VI.

Janie Ahrens fell into her couch clutching the mail in one hand and her short, black, food-stained apron in the other. After lifting her feet to the coffee table, she let her head fall back onto the striped cushions, closed her eyes and sighed off the stress of Bee's lunch rush. A strand of her imitation-blond hair fell, lying to rest on her shoulder. The conglomeration of food odors still clinging to her uniform shirt penetrated her breathing space. After a few minutes, Janie tossed her apron onto the unstable, hand-me-down table. It clunked from the weight of pens, change, server book and keys before sliding off the other side and landing on the dull grey, wall-to-wall, apartment carpet floor. Janie shook her head, rolled her eyes and sat up to look through her mail. Coupons, credit card offers and Casey's ad flyer fell into the yellow, miniature trashcan Janie had pulled from under the table to between her legs. The pile diminished to a single small envelope. Several times, she placed the card in her lap and picked it up again before finally opening the card with a shaking finger. It was a thank you note from Rianne and her new husband Ryan. Janie had been hoping for more, a personal note at the least. Reading the words quietly Janie knew she received the same words as many others:

Thank you for being a part of our very special day.

*The presence of so many precious family and friends
was certainly the perfect start to our marriage.*

Ryan and Rianne

Janie put the small card back in its little envelope and dropped it into her blue plaid keepsake box—a lifetime of pictures, camp postcards, birthday cards, letters and, now, a parting note—locking its magnetic top for the last time and tucking it into her hall closet. Janie checked the date on her calendar. It was almost July. Rianne and Ryan had been married now for almost a month. Dropping her head, Janie breathed a deep heavy sigh and then read the words aloud, to no one in particular. She checked the time on her watch. Closing her wet eyes, her head fell into her hands. She had withered away another day. Her eyes swelled from sorrow and her head caved from the penetrating tick-tock of the wall clock.

V.

Janie watched the clock tick the time until tomorrow. It was fast approaching. The events of this day had been filled with excitement and anticipation. Janie woke early in the morning to be sure to have plenty of time to get ready for her best friend's big day. She made a to-do list as she drank her coffee and planned each hour to the minute. She thought about that list as she played with her dessert fork and watched Rianne dance encircled by friends in a pagan adoration. She thought carefully about picking out a present from the wedding registry

that was too much for her budget; about planning her meals to not be desperately hungry during the ceremony; about the three hour physical preparation to be publicly presentable in the presence of wealth. Soon song and ritual ended, and the group dispersed. Rianne was finally without an entourage. Janie stood instantly upon seeing Rianne alone. She was ready for her encouragement, her hug, some tears and an ear-piercing scream so everyone would know Janie was someone special to Rianne. Janie screamed first to get it started.

"Rianne!"

Janie waved to Rianne as she weaved through the tables with the expertise of service. Still a few tables away, walking towards Janie but heading to the bar, Rianne had become deaf to her name from the many shouts for her attention throughout the day.

"God, you are beautiful," said Janie across the last table still separating the two friends. "And still so skinny. The perfect bride!"

The few people seated at the table looked at Rianne with Janie's last words. As she hurried around to Rianne, Janie pushed in the chairs out of habit.

"It's been ages and you look so good," Janie said, breathless.

As the last seat disappeared behind the white linen table cloth, empty space came between her and Rianne. Janie flung open her arms to embrace the woman who was the girl who changed her childhood. Janie's eyes flashed with memories of after-school meals, weekend sleepovers, back-to-school shopping. Seeing Rianne again wiped away the empty four years while Janie waited for Rianne to graduate college. As their hug connected, Janie felt the familiar warmth of nostalgia overwhelm her as she held close her newly married best friend.

"You look good too, Janie. I'm so happy to see you're here," Rianne spoke as she released Janie's hug, and quickly stepped back.

"Your invitation came so late, Ri!" Janie chastised. "I could have missed it."

She gently and playfully hit Rianne's hand then grabbed and squeezed it. Janie stepped forward for another hug and Rianne took a step back.

"I got it just last week. And..." Janie paused, dropped her arms and looked around her. "This is not a shotgun setup."

"I'm sorry about the invitation. But I ordered your dinner. Chicken—wasn't it divine? I knew you'd be here. We just had some last minute planning," explained Rianne, grasping her empty wine glass in one hand and brushing dust off of her dress with the other.

Janie took hold of Rianne's hand as she talked. "This is hardly last minute planning. It's too gorgeous for that."

"Thank you," said Rianne, pulling her hand back and looking over Janie's shoulder. "You're never really sure if your efforts are worth it." She waved at a

couple walking by.

"Worth it? What a wedding!" Janie dropped her arms but not her smile. "Goodness, long cry from barefoot at the park, huh? Remember that? You were going to wear a sundress and walk down the soccer field and have the reception in the pavilion with my dad making his famous pork chops and your mom's fruity Jell-O salad."

"Hmm, I forgot all about that," answered Rianne.

To fill the encroaching uncomfortable silence, Janie leaned against a chair still pushed in at the table. A setting from an empty seat sat solitary at the table's edge. Janie stared at the extravagance: a gold-rimmed plate shined above a dazzling gold charger, etched with ivy leaves, framed by gold plated flatware.

"I'm sorry the invitation was delayed," Rianne said, breaking the silence.

"No worries," answered Janie with a nervous laughter. "My nerves would have been wrecked from excitement if—"

"There was a mix-up with the caterer's count," interrupted Rianne. "First there were too many people, then not enough, but we ended up with an empty table and then I thought about you. I'm so glad I could invite you." Rianne faked her enthusiasm then leaned in to give Janie a hug.

"Last minute invite?" A tinge of pain entered Janie's voice. She returned the consoling hug. "Rianne, we've been through more than that."

"I'm glad to see you," said Rianne, avoiding the very true statement. "You look good," she continued, changing the subject.

"Me? No," Janie said, shaking her head and looking at the floor. "You are a beautiful bride," said Janie in her best complimentary tone, through the rising feeling of dejection.

"Thank you, I—"

"When can we get together?" interrupted Janie in an artificially excited tone.

"Well, um." Rianne adjusted her tiara, waved to another couple and wrinkled her brow. "I start a new job right after the honeymoon. And I start graduate school—"

"Graduate school," said Janie, with a fresh smile emerging. "How wonderful."

Rianne looked over Janie's shoulder at Ryan talking with one of the music professors.

"Ryan and I are moving into a new house," she looked, again, at Janie. "And we're getting a puppy. I just know I am going to be busy."

"Whatever!" Janie tried to laugh. "We're best friends—B.F.F. You have at least lunch."

Rianne sighed. "We were best friends, I remember, best friends forever, but that was kid stuff."

Rianne paused and scratched her head just under her tiara.

"But we can go to lunch," she said finally, "after the honeymoon and before school starts."

"Where should we go?" Janie asked, wanting to go somewhere memorable. "We should picnic in the park, just like we used to. Except we'll drive not ride our bikes."

"Yeah, okay," agreed Rianne.

She looked over her left shoulder at her parents who were talking with Ryan's grandparents.

"After the honeymoon," Rianne agreed with trepidation. "We'll go to lunch."

"We had a great fun there, at the park, growing up," Janie reminded Rianne. "All kinds of great fun. We had more than our share. We became who we are there. Time doesn't erase that. Not four measly little years after the eleven we had."

"No, but time changes things," answered Rianne in a sharp tone. "I need to, uhh—"

"We are who we are because of who we were," Janie interrupted Rianne out of frustration. "Part of who I am is because of our friendship. And the same goes for you, Rianne."

Janie paused for Rianne to acknowledge Janie's truth. Rianne fiddled with her glass.

"I know, Rianne," conceded Janie. "You have other guests who have become more important."

Rianne stood stone still and stared, only blinking rapidly from the heat, her nerves and sweat. Taking advantage of the pause, Janie handed her camera to a man now sitting at the table. He stood and walked around the table onto the dance floor.

Rianne talked as they turned and stepped onto the shiny hardwood floor. "We were best friends, Janie. As best childhood girlfriends go, you—"

"Is this a good place?" the man asked.

"Yes, it's fine," answered Janie. "Rianne, what are you saying?"

Rianne released the grip on her glass and slid her arm under Janie's and around her waist.

"Once upon a time, Janie," whispered Rianne. "We were best friends. But college and Ryan—"

"On the count of three," said the man. "One—"

"I just—" started Rianne.

"Two..."

"Janie, things have changed for me."

"Three."

The camera flashed.

"Stay there," said the man. "I'll get one more. That way you'll have an option, umm—"

With wrinkled eyebrows and squinted eyes, the man cocked his head.

"I'm sorry," he admitted after a few seconds silence. "I don't know your name."

He turned the camera for a vertical picture and counted down to the final picture. Janie's heart pounded quickly. Slowing down time. Blurring the room. Numbing her nerves.

"Here's your camera," said the man.

"Thank you for taking our picture," Janie answered.

"No problem, umm, young lady," the man replied. "Hope they turn out alright." He turned and sat back down.

"I have a new life," Rianne blurted. "You need to understand that."

Janie's heart sank when she heard these final words. She heard the laughter of her childish days go silent; watched the memories of summer camps and stargazing get cloudy; felt her youth fall from her hands. Janie took a deep breath to fight back the last of the tears pushing towards her cheeks.

"See you later, Janie." Rianne turned to walk to the bar.

"Goodbye, Rianne." Janie watched Rianne start to walk away from her. A server walked by and offered Rianne another glass of wine. She walked past Janie without stopping. Janie turned, let go of the chair, a grasp that she didn't realize she had, and walked to her table. Weaving through the maze of tables and chairs, the rest of the evening blurred into insignificance as she made use of the convenient proximity of her seat to the bar.

IV.

Janie spotted the tiny, plain white, vellum card that reserved her chair at the back of the reception hall. Seated at the last table in the room, the furthest from the wedding party, the dance floor and the hors d'oeuvres table, Janie was gratefully close to the bar. She scanned the table and watched several couples talking amongst themselves. There didn't seem to be a friendly face in the group. The tables were richly decorated: tablecloths in pink, peach and ivory to match the wedding colors; centerpiece arrangements of roses in the same colors; colored votive candles danced in front of every plate. Dozens of servers in starched shirts snaked in and out of the haphazard pattern of tables and chairs, purses and presents, taking orders for drinks. Janie ordered a white wine from a grandmotherly server and sat in her assigned seat to patiently await the celebrated entrance of her best friend. Her excitement grew with each approaching minute.

"Hi," the girl across from Janie said. "I'm Rose. I played piccolo with Rianne at Notre Dame." She was a perky, tiny little thing with big hair. A cute little bow in

her curly red hair matched her sunshine-yellow satin dress.

"I'm Janie. I grew up with Rianne." The introductions continued around the table: Ashton, Rose's husband; Britney and Larry; Joan and Jason and finally; Josh, an effeminate golf player turned stock broker who had already shed his jacket and loosened his tie.

Josh used to be the groom's roommate. Apparently, they used to have "such a row 'til Rianne calmed that boy down," as Josh explained seemingly trying to validate his seat. After Rianne met Ryan, he and Josh were no longer roommates, Josh's golf game suffered, and now he trades.

Josh talked about his friendship, but Janie turned in her chair for a better view of the entrance. She wanted to stand up. She wanted to run to the door and be the first one to welcome Mrs. Ryan Falkman to her reception. Anticipated joy rose in Janie's throat and welled in her eyes.

"Ryan still plays golf," Josh said rather loudly, interrupting Janie's daydream. "Did you know that?"

"No," Janie said, clearing her throat. "I didn't. Today was the first time I met him." Janie shifted quickly in her seat, trying to politely acknowledge Josh's attempted conversation. She returned her stare to the door just as quickly. She became even more anxious for Rianne to arrive so she could have an excuse to excuse herself from the table of friendly strangers.

"He's a teaching Rianne that game," replied Brittney, another ex-roommate turned something else entirely. She shifted in her chair, pulling at the hem of her red, strapless dress; she admitted later it was both too tight and too short.

"I heard she's got real good at it too," Brittney continued after settling back into her dress and her chair.

"Baby," said her husband Larry. "You should learn golf. Could turn out you'd be real good at it. Maybe pay my way for a while."

Janie turned back to the table to watch Larry slip his arm around Brittney's shoulder and kiss her on her cheek. His bright pink, satin tie clashed against her dress; his white shirt paled her delicate skin; his spiked blond-tipped brown hair matched her neglected roots. He pulled away and grabbed his glass.

"Josh, over there," said Larry as he pointed his finger across the table, "and Rob and me played together all the time freshman year."

Janie blindly listened to the bantering conversation, rarely paying attention to the details of everyone's relationship to the bride and groom. Her hands lay shaking in her lap. She eyed her wine glass, the condensation dripping down the stem, the circle of moisture on the table cloth. With a shifty glance, Janie occasionally eyed the door, and kept her ears on the band for the announcement of the arrival of the newlyweds.

"They all played in high school and met on a fraternity team here," explained

Brittney as Larry took a drink of his soda.

"In college," she clarified, blabbering in a her southern drawl, the sound echoing in Janie's ear, "the only sport Larry played with any regularity involved irresponsible decisions during irresponsible drinking."

"Better man for it though," Larry interrupted Brittney, startling Janie. "Got it out of my system, young."

Excited anticipation turned to nervous fidgeting. Janie turned back to the table, hiding her shaking legs with the soft table cloth. She sipped her wine, fiddled with her knife and watched the group's interactions.

"I know that," said Ashton. "Dude! I sure don't know how I ever graduated. Man! Those were the days." He nodded his head, repeatedly, agreeing with himself while chuckling.

Janie watched Ashton's hands float through the air as he reminisced of days unremembered.

"Hell yeah!" he exclaimed, still laughing about his delinquent drinking days. Although it appeared Ashton had pushed aside his college vice—he ordered diet soda—he still clung to the greasy, long-haired locks of hippies and stoners.

"Sweet!" yelled Jason as he raised his glass. "I remember those days. Well, actually I don't."

The group burst into comradic laughter. Jason, according to Joan, was also lucky he graduated.

"Shouldn't have been allowed to," admitted Jason as he raised his wine glass. "Suckers!"

He and his pals clinked glasses and swallowed mouthfuls of wine. Janie slowly raised a nervous hand from her lap to her wine glass. With meticulous movements, trying to steady a shaking hand, Janie raised her glass to her lips and sipped the chilled, sweet white wine.

"You said you grew up with Rianne," said Joan, deviating from the reminiscent conversation. "Was that back in St Louis?"

"Yeah, second grade on," answered Janie.

"Yeah. Ok. You are the one. She had a picture..." Joan paused for confirmation.

"We were together nonstop," said Janie. "Our parents used to have to pry us apart, until college."

"Yeah," Joan nodded in agreement. "Are you the one she played piano with?"

"Yeah," answered Janie. "We met through our piano teacher."

III.

The strings vibrated as the pianist's small hands struck an E chord. The doors at the back of the church closed behind an elegantly dressed pair of little

girls, and the crowd stilled. The ceremony to seal the sacramental, matrimonial bond began. The light pink mini-versions of satin, formal dresses rustled as the little flower girls pranced down the aisle, scattering rose petals on the well-worn carpet. Two little boys in tiny tuxedos marched down the aisle casually carrying ring pillows, one zooming his like a model airplane. Janie smiled at the beauty and innocence that surrounded her. Ryan walked to the head of the aisle from a door near the altar. The wedding party emerged from behind the doors and two-stepped up the aisle in perfect one-one-thousand, two-one-thousand time with the string quartet accompanying the procession. Each peach colored dress was beautifully tailored to elegantly fit every bridesmaid. Janie's heart began to leap. She clasped her hands and sat up straight in anticipated joy. The string quartet played to the end of the song, perfectly marking the completion of the wedding party procession. Janie's eyes softened, blurring the final two flower girls, in flowing white dresses, dropping more rose petals in the aisle. Janie bit her lip and turned placing her hand on the back of the pew. The "Bridal Chorus" brought the crowd to their feet, hands clasped in anticipation. The crowd stood, hushed. Janie watched Rianne emerge from behind the great oak doors and felt, instantly, that even though they were grown they were still something like each other. The music changed into the strains of "Moonlight Sonata," the first song Janie and Rianne had played together as a duet. Janie choked on her tears when the music penetrated her ears reviving her love and the incredible bond she and Rianne shared as children, as best friends growing up together.

Rianne walked, slow and poised, and smiled, big and bright, on her way to the altar. Janie could almost smell the fresh bouquet Rianne carried, white-knuckled. The sanctuary smelled how Janie remembered her mother's garden smelled at the peak of summer. She remembered the way she and Rianne used to get on their hands and knees to smell the fresh-cut grass, to see if it was as sweet. Her fluttering heart blocked out the sounds of the ceremony, and her imagination ignored her surroundings as she fantasized her reunion with Rianne as a magnificent emotional outburst, releasing four years of pent up passion. Janie dreamed of their later conversation, both women talking quickly, listening and speaking simultaneously, mid-sniffle, with tears of joy staining their cheeks. She watched herself pose for a picture with Rianne, the two together as adults, making funny faces and bunny ears in the old established tradition. Janie's imagination blurred the details of the ceremony: the vows, the exchanging of the rings, the lighting of the unity candle, and the kiss, were moments of laughter and childhood play.

The "Wedding March" startled Janie back to reality and she watched Rianne and Ryan skip down the aisle, arm in arm, with identical, ear-to-ear smiles. The wedding party followed as quickly. Proud parents patiently waited for their

escorts as the priest gathered his sacred materials. In generational order the families paraded to the vestibule to be the first to congratulate the couple before waiting for their own praises from the approaching crowd. With the exit procession complete, the volume erupted into chaotic conversation as guests stood and greeted one another while aggressively pushing towards the very aisle the newlyweds blessed with their joy, but Janie remained seated and watched the flurry of guests exit to the reception line. She wanted time to talk with Rianne before she was whisked off in the well decorated white limo to be photographed with her new husband.

Finally, she slowly made her way towards the reception line. With each slow step Janie peered over big heads and around wide waists to keep an eye on the bride. The closer Janie got to Rianne, the more she fluttered, the more she watched her, and the more she ached for the closeness they shared. Janie watched the couple hug guest after guest. She saw them hold hands during brief conversations. She smiled with pure joy each time Rianne and Ryan snuck in a kiss between congratulations. After several, patient minutes, waiting for her turn, Janie reached the tail of the line of family. Janie spied several people she couldn't recognize. Many members of Ryan's family courteously thanked the stranger for attending the ceremony and others asked if she would be attending the reception: "any friend of Rianne's," echoed from person to person. Rianne's family, the only three in the line she recognized, huddled in the middle. With genuine enthusiasm, they each hugged Janie and small-talked while waiting for Rianne and Ryan to finish with the current guest. Finally, Janie hugged her second family and stepped up to the honored platform.

"Janie! Oh my God! You made it!" Rianne exclaimed, and leaned over for a hug. "This is my husband Ryan. Isn't he cute?" Rianne pointed to her pride and grabbing his hand she leaned over and kissed him on the cheek.

"Oh!" she exclaimed when she returned her attention to Janie. "It's good to see you. I'll see you later at the reception," and in the same breath, "Amy! Oh my God! Give me a hug girl." Janie was hip-brushed aside and pointed to the door by a handsome married usher. Momentarily stunned, Janie stared at the door. She stepped back into the vestibule, turned, and headed toward the rest-room. She smiled at the few remaining guests, eyed the bride, and stepped through the swinging door into the silence of the private room. Locking the door, Janie then slid to seated on the floor. Her imagination flashed to First Communion and watched her and Rianne seated next to each other in matching white dresses. She watched herself stand in line for the Host and her first sip of wine.

Janie shook her head and stood. She flushed the toilet only to make noise and washed her hands. With her hand on the door knob, Janie leaned her ear to

the door to listen and didn't hear any conversations or foot steps. She opened the door and found an empty church, then walked to the exit. Through the dark doors she saw Rianne and Ryan get into their limo. Her imagination returned to First Communion. She watched her and Rianne skip through the same vestibule, through the same doors and into the waiting arms of their parents. She watched herself get into her parents' Ford, the same car her mom drove in college. She watched Rianne get into her dad's new Lincoln. Pushing with both hands, Janie opened the door and her eyes watered from the bright sunshine.

II.

The church doors closed behind her, and she surveyed her surroundings. Spotting Rianne's mom, Irene, at the far end of the vestibule, Janie hustled over to say hello. As the best friend of the critical period of ages seven through eighteen, Janie assumed she had the right to see the bride for a lasting hug, joyful tears, and the mandatory scream of two girlfriends who haven't laid eyes on each other for ages. She wanted to see her for the last time as the selves they were before Rianne Luzin became Rianne Falkman.

"Janie!" Irene flung her arms out wide, and then they tightened like a constrictor around Janie. "It is so good to see you. Rianne will be excited you made it," she whispered in Janie's ear before pushing her back for the full head-to-toe inspection.

"I wouldn't have missed this for the world," said Janie with an honest excitement. "Which room?" asked Janie, pointing to two doors in the vestibule. "I'm going to pop my head in and say hi."

"You'd better not," Irene remarked in such a sharp tone that Janie was momentarily stunned. "You know how it is on the big day, honey," reassured Irene. "She is very busy and nervous. Make-up, hair, dress, pictures, all that. You know."

"It won't take but a second. I just want to say hi." Janie pleaded with Irene. She cocked her head, and Janie took this as her permission. With one step toward Rianne, Irene grabbed Janie's elbow.

"Honey, go on inside the church and have a seat," said Irene.

"But, I—"

"You can catch up at the reception," interrupting her interruption. "She's busy getting ready to be married." She patted Janie's shoulder and shooed her towards the ushers posted at the door.

An usher handed Janie the paper program and asked, "Bride or Groom?"

"Bride, please," requested Janie.

"There's really only room on the groom's," answered the married usher. Janie turned around hoping to get a glimpse of Rianne. Instead she got a full-view of Irene bending over a diaper bag and the toddler ring bearer's tuxedo pants as a

white swoosh flipped around the edge of a patrician wall. The usher put Janie's hand in his arm and escorted her to an aisle seat in a back row.

I.

Janie sat down and stared across the vast room. She picked up her mail from the coffee table. A square envelope fell onto her lap from between the pages of pizza delivery coupons. She recognized the return address name but not the place. She hastily opened the outside envelope and pulled out a smaller envelope with her name inscribed in cursive. The invitation was to her best friend's wedding. Her hands began shaking with excitement as she read the words with teary eyes:

*Love was meant to be shared with parents, family and friends.
Rianne Marie and Ryan James have found love in each other.
Because you have shared in their lives by your friendship and love,
We invite you to celebrate with us the marriage of our children,
On Saturday, the twenty-third of May, Two Thousand and One,
At four o'clock in the afternoon at St. Clair's Church,
Followed by a reception at Windows on Washington.
Mr. and Mrs. Peter Louis Luzin
Mr. and Mrs. James Taylor Falkman*

Joy bubbled in her throat. Tears flowed from her eyes as Janie read the words, over and over again, to herself. She let the rest of the mail fall to the floor as she leaped in spontaneous excitement, jumping for joy across her living room floor. She looked again at the glossy invitation and returned to her seat on the couch. She held the card close to her heart and closed her teary eyes.

Janie thought about all the times she and Rianne played on the church parking lot at recess. She thought about the after-school afternoons making mud pies in her back yard and cookies in Rianne's kitchen. She thought about the last time she had seen her best friend: watching her play the piccolo at halftime during the Notre Dame vs. Air Force game mid-season her freshman year away at college.

Janie brushed aside the knowledge that Rianne was now a stranger to her—it had been five years since they had last seen each other—but as soon as the childhood memories flooded her mind's eyes, she felt, again, Rianne was her best friend, her confidant and coconspirator, her past and her new beginning.

After several minutes, Janie stood from her couch and crossed her living room to her aged, warped bookshelf. She pulled a keepsake box from the top shelf, opened it and began shuffling through the artifacts. Each note, letter, postcard and picture brought fresh tears healed by soft laughter and big smiles.

Ceramics Untitled

April Dean



Daniel-kinesis

Sarah Martha Shipman

An empathic synesthesian
Fawning over the aesthetic of the hollows of your face
Don't make the place I hang from every word of your lips
The gallows of a criminal renegade

You left a savory taste in my mouth
A tactile sensation—a representation of the light at the end of the tunnel
I can't explain just how the timbre of your voice
Offers me a world of serenity

Tidings—tidings of greatness
Sweep through the wind when you're coming here
I listen to all the music that reminds me of you
And think of all the right words that were never created

When these things fail, I have the scent of your neck
The way your eyelids fall at the trigger of my finger
These words are not enough
These words are not enough

A subtle sensation of hot red
Tinges my ears and my cheeks
When you say I should belong within your reach
And when I agree, the words are not enough

Dawn's

John Shelley Summerfield Jr.

misty, sensuous fog
covers her body complete—
light charging her surface
strikes the irises in waking—
my hands full of her
falling from me
down into her own hollow
completely unrestricted
like fire in a dry forest
forever unquenched.

Death of Judas

Franklin Lee Dillard II



Gatekeeper

Franklin Lee Dillard II



Villanelle for New Orleans

James Terrell

i walked through the open door
And out onto that stoic lawn.
The silence of the tragic air was its own folklore.

The monkey grass bent double and sore,
Debris clinging to the wet dirt.
i walked through the open door,

And almost immediately could take no more
of the horrible somehow piles of leaves
And the silence of the tragic air, its own folklore.

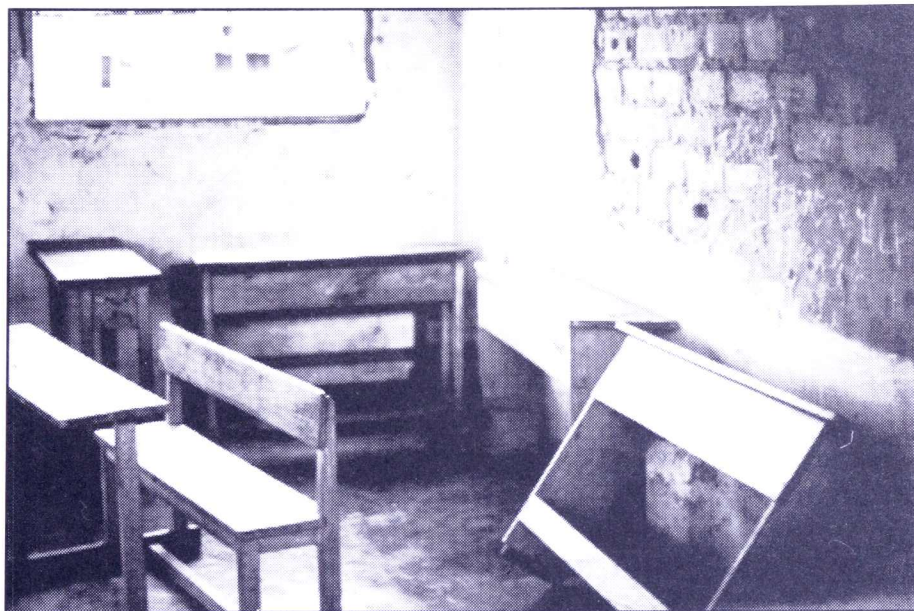
Frozen Death in an inaudible roar,
Sang broken verses out of key.
When i walked through that open door,

My breath was iron ore;
My pale skin dissolved into my white T-shirt.
The silence of the tragic air was its own folklore,

Singing a different tune in the same song
As we shared God on that stoic lawn.
When i almost walked through your door,
The silence of the tragic air was its own folklore.

Class Dismissed

Denis Tricoche



Just a Formality

Sydney Lanier

I've got this terrible itch. It's on the back of my leg—my right leg. If it wasn't there, I'd just casually lift my skirt an inch or two in that area and scratch it absentmindedly. Instead, I tell myself that, like so many other things, if I don't think about it, if I pretend it's not there, it'll go away.

don't think about it, my old mantra. don't think about it, don't think about it, don't think—ah, Jesus Christ that's better.

It's not long before I realize that my moment of relief is precipitated by my pawing and clawing at my skin like a bear attacking the empty stream on its first fishing trip. And then I feel the eyes on me. Apparently I've garnered the attention of some man. Apparently he had been eying the hem of my skirt, and I've just given him two more inches of fantasy. Apparently this is what I get for my half power suit, half casual woman-in-the-workplace ensemble I try desperately to pull off.

I can count the seconds without fail until the stare turns cold. It's usually three and a half, the less observant sometimes stretch it out for six. This guy, this supermarket pig, makes it a cool four and a half before he realizes what he's seeing. Yes, that's a huge chunk of skin that shouldn't be like that. Yes, it's a scar. Yes, it's big and unattractive. His look doesn't tell me anything I don't already know.

With as casual a motion as I can muster, I smooth my skirt back against my leg and move on to the refrigerated aisle. We need cheese, I see, as I consult my mental list. We definitely need cheese. Soon I am confronted by the Lunchables. Perfect. My mind switches into calculator mode as I figure how many boxes it'll take to make my kids happy for a week. Simple number problems like this should be no problem after years of school. I reach out and begin to empty the shelves into my cart, silently counting out fifteen—no, ten Lunchables. I have to put a few back.

This shouldn't be a problem. I'm thinking variations on this same expression when the room blurs around me on the edges and my face gets warm. I start to fan myself, but it's hard to swallow and flailing my hand in the air is really doing me no good. I figure the best plan of attack is to hold firmly to the shopping cart, leave the grocery store, and don't think about it. I make my way to the front of the store, pay for my cheese and Lunchables, and walk briskly to my car. Trying to climb into the SUV that's really too big for me, I scrape my arm against the corner of the door, tearing my sleeve. The corners of my eyes feel a little wet, but I pull together the tan fabric and slam the door.

Everything is tan! The tan car with the tan interior, my tan shoes, my tan skirt, my damned tan shirt with the torn-but-tan sleeve. Whoever decided this is classy should be shot.

The dashboard clock reads 5:34 and I see that I'm going to be late for the

babysitter. Again. I really can't afford this anymore. I mean, it is a little cheaper now, but I feel too guilty to even think it. I know it's my fault. He was always so angry—dinner wasn't on time, the kids were too loud and hadn't had their baths, the dog knocked over the trashcan, and I hadn't picked it up yet. All this, and he "paid for a goddamn babysitter so I should have time to cook his fucking dinner." I did the best I could to pacify him, but that night he was too drunk to listen.

He came in the bedroom doorway, barely able to stand, red-faced and demanding that I make him another sandwich. I told him that I was working, and I would make him whatever he wanted in ten minutes. He sneered and I saw the knife. I got off the bed and walked over to him, reaching out to take it from him. He lunged at me, but, losing his balance, fell forward; it was only a second before he reacted, slashing the back of my knee. I muffled a scream with my sleeve as I fell beside him on the floor. His eyes were wild. He slowly wrapped my fingers around the knife, still gleaming with speckles of my own blood. And that's when he whispered those words.

"Things will be better if you just kill yourself."

I laid there on the floor, blood puddling around my leg, staining the tan carpet. All I could do was cry.

"I'm leaving. Right now." He stumbled up off the floor and into the hallway. I wasn't going to stop him—I couldn't have if I had wanted. But this was probably the best thing that had happened in a long—"I'm taking Jack," He cut into my thoughts. "Brian's a faggot and Sophie's retarded, so you can be a horrible mother to them, and I don't care. But I'm fucking taking Jack."

And he did. He took my son and left the house. And I didn't get off the floor for four hours. That was two months ago—two months and three days—and the only thing I heard from them was the horn blaring as they spun out of the driveway.

Now the blaring horns are coming from the cars spinning around me at the intersection, flipping me a gesture here and yelling out their windows there. I don't know how many green lights I've sat through, but it's now 5:47 and I'm only a block closer to home.

The babysitter made macaroni for dinner, so after a barrage of hugs and lookwhatImadeatschool's, I collapse in my office for round two. About two minutes later, there is a tiny tapping at the door. Sophie is standing there, looking sheepish for interrupting me working.

"Yes, hon?" I take a deep breath.

"When are Daddy and Jacky coming home?" She twists a little ringlet around her finger so she doesn't have to look me in the eyes to wait for my response.

"I don't know, sweetie. You know they're at Grandma's house. Go play in your room, ok? You know this is Mommy's first big case."

"I don't know why these grocery stores have to be so damn cold," I muttered to no one in particular as the doors slide open and a blast of cool air raises the hair on my arms. I grab a basket from the "convenient" stack and head for the canned food aisle. Maybe it makes me a picky eater, but I don't trust food that couldn't make it through the apocalypse. Too bad they stopped using those thick tin cans. Aluminum is for wusses.

Soon my basket is filled with cans of peas, carrots, corn, and chicken broth. I make sure that I have an even number of each. Odd numbers are for freaks. A voice catches my attention; it's a little boy screaming, "Mommy, can I have this? Please, can I have it?" Little boys are so obnoxious. The boy's mother holds up one finger as she examines the different kinds of soups and the boy starts stomping his feet. His sister rolls her eyes and says in a mocking tone to the boy, "You know she's going to say no. She always does."

See. She's so much better behaved. Little girls are so much better. Why would anyone want a boy? They're dreadfully loud; they're rude; they're dirty. But that little girl is sitting quietly in the back of the shopping cart. Not yelling, not stomping, not begging. Quiet.

Soft crunching accompanies two shrieks as they float into my brain from the right. My curiosity gets the best of me and I travel to the aisle the noise came from. Who would have guessed, but a little boy knocked over a display of Cap'n Crunch; his mother was frantically trying to re-stack the fallen boxes and apologize to the teenage store worker who just sighed and shooed her away from the mess. Stupid little boys, always causing trouble. That's why they need to be punished.

Rolling my eyes, I step into the 15 Items or Less line. A little blond boy's eyes grow wide as he looks up at me. Moving backward very carefully, almost tripping over his mother's shoe, he hides behind the protective legs. His little legs are shaking. I don't recognize him, but judging by his actions, he must have been punished.

This just proves my theory, I think. Look how well he's behaving now! He's quiet and out of the way!

I give myself a mental pat on the back. It's too bad that so many people disagree with me. It works, why not use it? After all, aren't I in a better position to judge what's good and what isn't?

I hate grocery stores. The air's real cold and it always smells like everything's clean and wet. Everything I eat comes in a bag or a box or a can, and I can get that at Wal-Mart. I haven't even plugged my refrigerator in for months—I used to drink milk but it was the only thing I had in there so I can save money by just

drinking water and not paying for that electricity.

I have to walk around so I don't look weird in here. I try to look casual as I head down the aisle with the pasta and salad dressings. I stop for a minute, trying to make a face that says, "Do I want fettuccine or linguine?" to the old-as-dirt woman beside me. "Any suggestions?" I ask.

She holds out a bony finger that looks like its skin is dripping off—I almost crack a laugh thinking of it sliding off and plopping down to the floor and then puddling. She's pointing to some fettuccine, so I nod and grab a box. "Thanks," I mumble.

She starts to push her buggy at about negative three miles per hour, so I turn and walk the other direction. After I turn the corner at the end of the aisle I put the fettuccine on a shelf and keep walking. There's no way in hell I'd eat that shit.

I check my watch. 5:28. Ernie should be here. I walk real slowly over to the aisle with the baby diapers, or what I like to call "my office." Ernie's not here, so I have to pretend to be looking at the diapers. Great.

"Um, can I help you, sir?"

I turn around and there's some teenage store worker standing behind me, looking expectantly. I guess I either don't look like the kind of guy that needs diapers, or I look like the kind of guy that needs them but doesn't know which ones. I smile a real goofy smile and say, "Eh, not really. I'm just trying to figure out which ones are the most absorbent."

Two shrieks coming from the other end of the store save me as he runs off to see what's going on. Ernie runs up, out of breath, and just looks at me. I pull up my sleeve and check my watch again. 5:33. "You're late," I say.

"Hey, nice watch. It's all shiny and stuff, I bet you got a real good deal on it, right?" He winks at me a few times.

I roll my eyes. This guy, this scrawny New York greasy-haired guy that calls himself my "business partner" actually just winked at me over the "deal" I got on my watch. "Yeah, Ernie, real good deal. So tell me, why are you here? Hell, why am I here?"

"Well, see. I got this guy." He starts fidgeting around in his pockets, but doesn't seem to find what he's looking for. "Anyway, this guy, he wants a TV. A big TV with surround sound and that thing where there's a little picture in the corner of the screen but you still got the big picture for the main part."

"It's called picture-in-picture. It's not that hard to remember." I try to keep from rolling my eyes again.

"Yeah, that's it. You think you got something like that around?"

"I think something just like that is going to fall off the truck in a few days."

"No, no, he doesn't want something that fell. He needs something that works."

He isn't going to pay you for something that's broken."

"Ernie, that doesn't . . . oh, whatever. Ok, I'll get him one in a few days, and I'll make sure it didn't fall off of anything."

"Can we get it sooner, like tomorrow? I already told him you always do business real quick."

"I've got to wait until they have me closing up the store, and I don't even go back for the next couple of days. I've been on jury duty, remember?"

"Oh, yeah. How's that going? Is that bastard guilty or what?" He starts to bounce a little with anticipation. Sometimes I think he looks like a goddamned chihuahua.

"You know I can't talk about the trial, Ernie."

I've been waiting for this day for a really long time. I mean, in a way, I've been trying not to even think about it. My hands shake a little bit whenever someone talks about "what I must be going through" or the "moment of truth" that's coming. It's kind of ridiculous.

Everything in the past few days has been a drag—I had nothing to do but stare at the wall. I've had like a day and a half by myself since the last court day, because apparently I can't be around other people. Whatever, I wouldn't never hurt anyone. And I think I've made myself clear about that.

I mean, they can't convict a man that never did anything, right? I think the worst thing I ever did was steal a video from a rental store. Well, that's what they said I did, but I really lost it, I think my dog chewed it up or something, but whatever happened it didn't go back to the store, and I didn't pay for it. Now I rent from the store across the street and the other one sends me a letter every couple of months that I throw away. But I never killed no one.

There are footsteps coming. I don't want to talk to no one—I hope they're not coming for me. But they are—it's the guard, and he says my lawyer is waiting for me.

"Hey pal," Mr. Carlile, the lawyer says, pointing one finger at me as the guard leads me into the room where he is sitting at a long table. He's one of those real nice guys that talks real fast that you see on TV with all those people that say he got them thousands of dollars when they got hurt. I don't want thousands of dollars, I just want to go home and see my mama and my wife and my baby. "You ready for what's happening tomorrow?"

"What's tomorrow?"

"The deliberation and the verdict. Maybe even the sentencing if they fuck things up and that quacker judge decides to pull something outta his ass. But that, you know, won't happen." He tries to flip his pen around his fingers but it doesn't work and the pen goes flying across the room. He pretends it didn't happen.

"Mr. Carlile, the deliberation is today."

"Eh, you sure? Today's the twelfth, isn't it?"

"Yeah, but remember we only go to court on the even days. Remember, that's what the judge wants."

"I thought it was odd days. Well, it's not really important, it's just a formality now." He looks away like he's thinking about something else.

"A formality?"

"Yeah, we already proved you didn't do it. Now, they just got to admit it."

"Oh, ok, Mr. Carlile. That lady lawyer seemed to think she got me though . . . She don't got me, right, Mr. Carlile?"

"Mmm, she could get me if she wanted, let me tell you. I bet that little tan number she's always wearing comes off real easy. You know it's the real prissy ones that know what they're doing."

I ignore him as he goes on and on about the lady lawyer. It's not long before they come and tell me I can move into the court holding cell, and then into the court room. I follow orders real quietly and don't cause any problem, just like my mama told me to do. I just sit there while the judge talks, and then Mr. Carlile talks, and then the lady lawyer Mr. Carlile likes talks. The lady lawyer says she thinks I ought to be locked up forever for what I've done, even though I told her and everyone else I didn't do it. After a while, I stop listening to what she says because she's talking a lot longer than Mr. Carlile did and she hates me anyway. I take the pen from in front of Mr. Carlile and try to flip it around like he's always trying, but the guard comes up real fast and takes it from me. The judge doesn't look too happy about it.

The jury gets up and leaves, and then everyone in the room starts talking. Mr. Carlile says that he thinks things have gone real well and he doesn't think it'll take long for the jury to deliberate. He's right, because about five minutes after he came back from getting coffee the jury comes back.

"Members of the jury, have you reached a verdict?" the judge asks.

One guy in the front row of the jury stands up; he's got really hairy hands and a really shiny watch. I keep staring at his watch. I think my daddy had a watch like that, but it probably wasn't real, and it sure wasn't never that shiny. "Yes, your honor. We have." With one of his hairy hands he reaches out a piece of paper and gives it to a guard. The guard gives it to the judge.

"And how do you find the defendant?"

"Sir, the members of the jury find the defendant . . ." He pauses to take a deep breath and looks over at the rest of the jury. Everyone is looking at them. None of them are looking at me. "Guilty," he says.

Shibuya

Adam Forrester



An Ancient Ritual

Willie Pace

The leaves were colored: red, and yellow,
And many other shades of brown
And canopied that country lane,
Where, on each side, stood a doe and two fawns

The latter would most prancingly run—both to and fro
Near to crossing, but back they would go
To the farmhouse in the meadow below—so jollily
Where stood a rare blooming bright-white Rose of Sharon tree

Then a blanket of snow began to fall, I do attest
Where, stood a copse of ancient oak with arms outstretched
Among those strong branches there was a glade
Where green-grass shimmered still with trodden blades

Ascent like a tower in the midst raised high, was a mighty boulder gray
Resplendent it was all around with Angel rings, and the novel St. John's Wort
grew gay
And not too far off, a mighty river wended, where dainty fishes swim,
Near here, the spotted fawn capered unconcerned. Then on a whim,

Voices of our not too far-off servant ancestors reached my ears
Songs they sang in unison: steal away, steal away, these were their pleas
Then a loud voice rose higher than the rest, singing high God's behest
That made the fawns' ears up-perk; then laid he quietly down to rest.

Willie Pace

Untitled

Orion Wertz



Eyes like Broken Icicles

John Phillips

It was a blue night, twilight, a tiger night,
of the many present things; the brightness was her,
 with an old voice like leaves falling,
 crisp and pretty.

I looked at her, nerves a-clatter, and spoke a better poem than this—
her answer was a christmas wind in summer.
Last Christmas, it was—

 cold.

I hung up my poem and went inside.

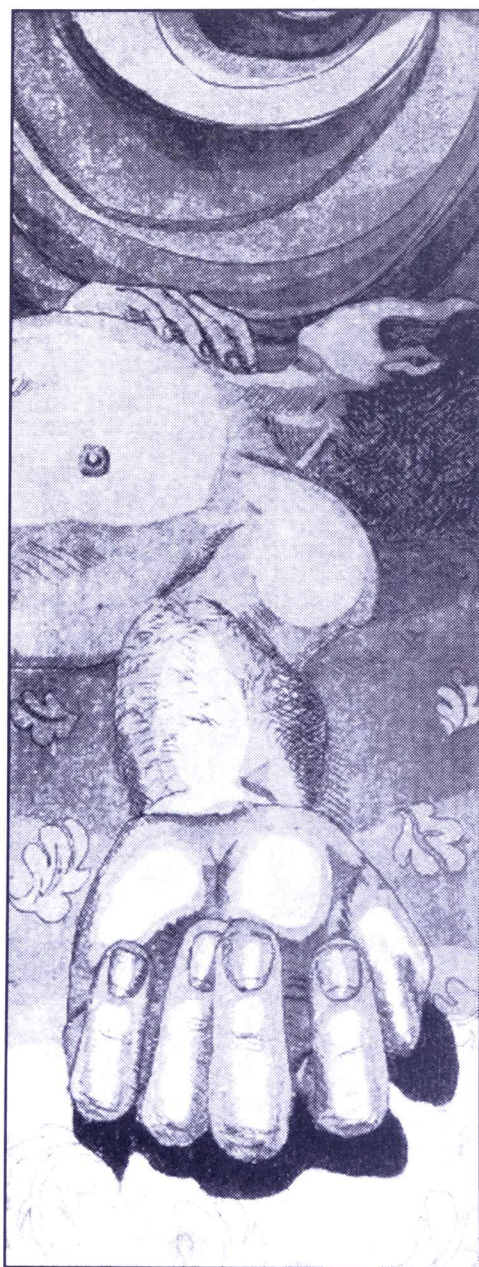
Father's Hands

Obadiah Booker

You had strong hands, rough wood grain palms,
And I remember our first father's day,
I bought you a watch. The kind contractors
Never seem to wear, gold plated band, silvery
Plastic coating covering the face, and
Arms that smiled when the sun hit them just right.
And you wore it until it broke.
Your fat wrist seemed to expand upon
Every watch you ever owned. I stopped
Giving you watches, and bought ties instead—
Ties for work, plain text ties that read # 1 father.
And you wore them, spilt coffee on them,
Smashed your thumb with a hammer and
Drizzled blood on them. You said you'd clean them
But those ties began to rot and stink
And we threw them out, you smiled.
And I found out you never used lotion. Atrocious,
It seemed the reason for your 2x4 hands
Was because of your lazy-ass, so I bought you
Pink flowered passion fruit lotion.
Then you said you had a gift for me too
For being so sardonic,
And you smothered your hand with lotion
And your stone carved lotion-scented hand bruised
My smug face, Wow your hands were hard,
And we laughed about it years later, your oily
Lotioned hand gripped my shoulder,
You fell in love with lotion, the Scent, womanly,
Would mask your musk odor yet your hands stayed hard,
And we don't speak about watches
And you stopped wearing ties, and you reeked of lotion,
And I'll never stop crying.
It was the first time I remember crying. So it became a tradition,
Crying on father's day, crying on birthdays,
Crying when gifts were given to anyone, crying...
And as I hold your stiff, rigid hand, I smell the
Sweet faint aroma of the woman's lotion you loved,
And I trace your cold palm with my finger, and in your
Casket I place a watch, a tie, a bottle of lotion,
And my hands become your hands, hard hands, father's hands.

T.R. III

Les Cuebas



Amor de la Lengue

Kevin Rameriz

¡Ay! To make love in Spanish, in a manner as tender and electric
As the twists and snakings of the Salsa,
To have my lover sigh *mi corazón*, *mi precioso*, *mi querido*,
And whisper things in that language that I know nothing about,
Though my blood pulses, pulses
To the strum of the Spanish guitar and the thumps of the African drum.
Whispering words that mothers croon to babies, that *abuelas* mumble heavily,
Words that swell gently in the curtained light of the kitchen window,
That smell faintly like flour tortillas,
That taste of sweet chocolate, swirling in the white of her skin,
That sound like *mi familia* talking all at once in the living room,
That feel like sleeping with the windows open in the absence of an air conditioner.

That language.
That swift sweep of air through a yellow-green lawn,
That startled fluttering,
Like that of a crowd of half-conscious crows or an enamored heart.
Nothing in that language sounding wrong.

How could I ever make love in English again?
That clunky, sharp, polygonal language.
English, with its starched g's and rigid r's,
Crunchy as an apple and clumsy as an infant.
How could I ever make love in English again
When Spanish sails from the mouth on airy wings of silk,
When Spanish rolls and slips and spills with ease?
It all sounds so true, so right, when the tongue sings out in
That language.

Untitled

Lacey Nicole Ferguson



Where is the Key?

Willie Pace

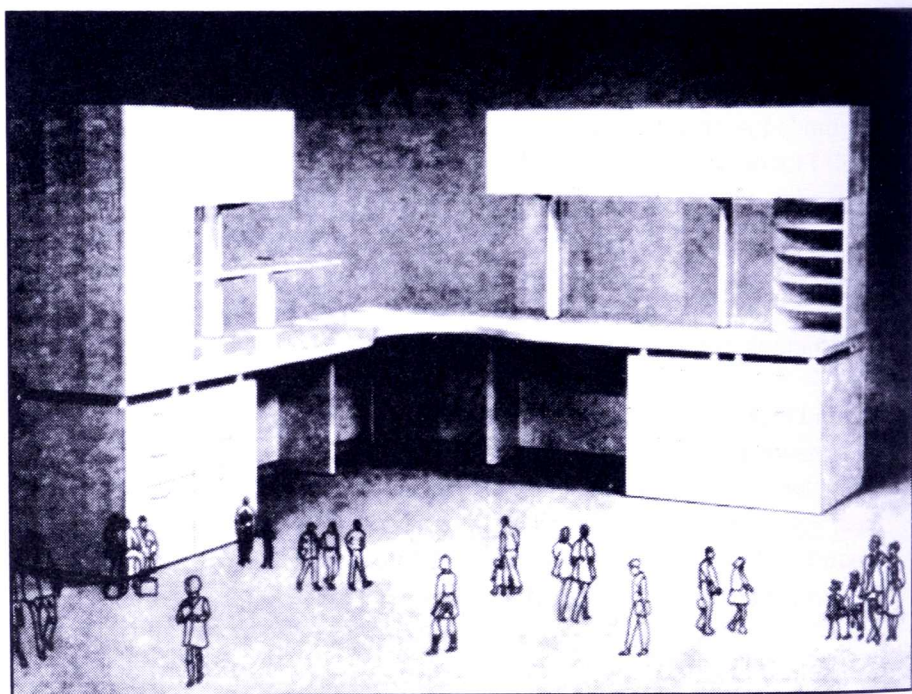
With her back toward the window,
She sat contemplating the hours unending
To some far off place to us unknown
Her life no longer would ebb nor flow
No sorrow shown, nor pain, despair or glee.
She oftentimes misplaced the keys
Far beyond locked in mystery
Her deep disconsolate thoughts never showed in her eyes
Hope for her was forever un-regained.
Oh! I had so many things that went unsaid, years ago
But it was all about my life then; and hers of servitude
No, she never had much interest in material things
A rose meant so much; more than any glittering thing
Now, things for her are unassociated, unconnected to time.
She seems forever lost, staring at nothing discernable
Her brown eyes never mist over; but daily I cry
Whenever I see her lonely glance; and I cannot augment her comfort
It is a torment for me; I do not know how, or when, or
If she is in pains or standing at death's door.
I ask, but she cannot answer for my want
Perhaps her soul has quietly stolen away
And left this sad functionary in her stead
Always looking across the room at her favorite spot
But then, she has no friends; they've gone before
She has no Lover left to share her thoughts; my Father's death a lore
I wish I could help her find those keys
The lost keys that locked her soul from her memories.
But, love is now for us more than comfort;
When I put red ribbons in her hair I feel as if she knows;
But, she just looks at her favorite place forlornly
I wish for gifts to close her pain
Maybe if I were like she, we could sit and hold hands
Then I could enjoy with her that place on the wall where nothing hangs

I did find some keys one day, behind the hot water heater
I brought them to her and put them in her hand
Home can sometimes be a comfort; but only when she sleeps
For that's the only thing she does that's normal
Then I found some other keys far away from home
Now, I am sure someone else is locked outside,
Now, these keys are mine; I am the one with needfull hope
I am the one filled with angst and despondency; it leaves my body nude
What unkind being would keep her there—peering into the abyss . . .
When I look at her, I see a torrent of tears but only in my eyes

When I look into her eyes I see her despair
That hollows out my soul in this human place
Tears leave sore blisters upon my face.
Yes, my mother sat with her back to reality
I now feel how she must have felt, it's lonely now, but she is gone
I know how she felt when the rain looked to her like snow
My soul has stolen away too, where can I go for love and care?
While I travel in these unnamed places; but undaunted, I must return.
For, no one takes me in their arms, or puts red ribbons in my hair

Untitled

Hannah Israel



Forest Wrestlers

Erika Adams



War

Jackie Frankovich

Since ancient conflicts how can humanity further endure?
Children lost and parents drowned in their innocent blood.
The rich stay in warmth as cold death is brought to the poor.
Graves dug of filthy wet earth as bodies land with a dull thud.

Fear and not optimism is what drives a person.
Naught the ounces of deeds are done of goodwill.
Faith and willpower to live eventually worsen,
And constantly in horror of them being a sniper's simple kill.

Families gone, pictures burned and houses bombed.
God can only bring hope to this brutal site.
Nightmares will always return when all is calmed.
Noble or not, just or not that will never make it right.

Chaos consumes even civil nations with all out attack.
Empty helmets atop lonely rifles and dangling dog tags,
The young lie in the icy dirt apathetic of the dark black.
To faintly remind us, the brave come home with only folded flags.

What sacrifices one makes for war.
Is it worth it with vanished loves and a forgotten soul?
But they all say it is for Navy, Army, Air Force or Corps.
Liars! Absolutely nothing is in the soldier's control.

If you want battle, fight your own shameful war!
Like those who have feared daily mortars and the deadliest shot,
Go experience the loads of despair and gore.
For all who want war, please slowly rot.

Downtown

Cassandra Lagmay



Untitled

Amanda M. Averett

I've welcomed a new day with the tides of each coast,
Grew lonesome on the travels in between,
And felt warmth while walking across the Brooklyn Bridge
Because you, too, once traveled that path
And we experienced the same atmosphere.

We were connected for a concise moment in time.

Yearning to feel you in my vicinity
And being plagued by the uncertainty of never knowing
What it is that you could truly mean to me
Is more than I can tolerate while out here all alone.

Someone should have warned me that this world can be so cold
And that a heart can freeze soon after it's set ablaze.

I'm stranded on this self-provoked island of solitude
And my flares are going unnoticed—
Diminished and faded as soon as they're fired.

I'm intrigued and devoted, yet remain unseen.
All of my thoughts and emotions fall upon deaf ears
And are cast aside for seeming lackadaisical.
Give me a reason to stay here with you.

Take notice. Take interest.

Someone should have warned me that these heights are dizzying
And that the climb can kill you long before the fall.
My actions go unnoticed by no one but you—
Disregarded and dismissed, even before they're shown.

These feelings don't comply with the rules.

I fear the night and having to close my eyes.
It's the harsh reminder that you're always so far away,
Even in times when I'm sitting by your side.
There's so much I could express, yet I dare not speak a word.

And I'm disgusted by the thought of waiting anymore.

Light Bulb

Addie Hughes



Thoughts of the Unwanted: Those who are Never Born

Lori Hinkley

When I sleep I wonder if my
conscience joins the part of me—
the me they did not want theirs.
The me that is the not-me
that plays with the other unwanted.

We laugh at cradles never rocked
and chalk drawings on the sidewalk
still stuck in the chalk.

We gaze on homework never suffered through
pretending to be fairies and knights, kings and queens
with no land over which to reign.

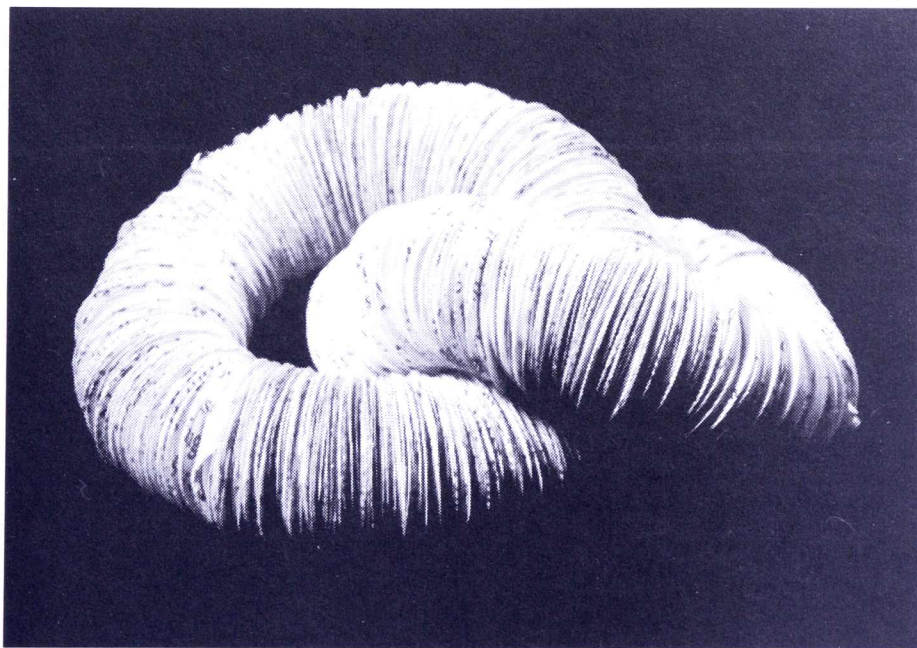
The not-me knows the not-you and we join our
hands—not in union, but in sameness
to form Babies never made
never begun, never flesh
never blood

I wake to know you are beside me
and I reach under the smoothness of cotton to thread my fingers between yours
knowing only that our confluence of genetic material
sleeps two rooms away.

And she will never ask her unconsciousness what it does while she sleeps
And he will never question his un-self
because I grabbed your hand many years ago
in an un-dream
and never let go...

Untitled

April Dean



Evolution

Neal Jordan



The Truth Is...

C. Edward Watkins

"I'm a motherfucking freedom fighter!"
Malik says as he takes his lighter
and sparks his Maui Wowie.
The cops can't stop me.
The gov'ment don't wanna.
He stands on the corner
in his Bob Marley T-Shirt,
pedaling poison not caring who he hurts.
"I don't force them to buy this shit.
If they don't want it, they should just quit."
Can't blame him for the young mother
who steals money from her big brother
so she can ease the pain
caused by a lack of crack Cocaine.
He helps her to scratch her addiction's itch.
You may call him a self-righteous son-of-a-bitch
as he blazes a joint with his lighter
and calls himself a freedom fighter.
He's at the end of the supply chain.
The dope somehow has got on a plane.
The same agents who claim to keep us free,
bring the drugs that imprison you and me,
and as if it is for our own good
they give to the, "Maliks" to spread
through our neighborhoods.
You know what Malik, go ahead,
and spark your lighter.
Because just like the CIA you can say:
"I'm a motherfucking freedom fighter!"

Johnny's Elegy

Jason Richardson

Life is but a flake of snow
Alighted upon scorching sands
And with every moment's passing
It melts nearer Death's cold hands

Life's much too fragile to fool with
And much too short to live it wrong
Life must be lived as best one can
For snow in deserts won't last long

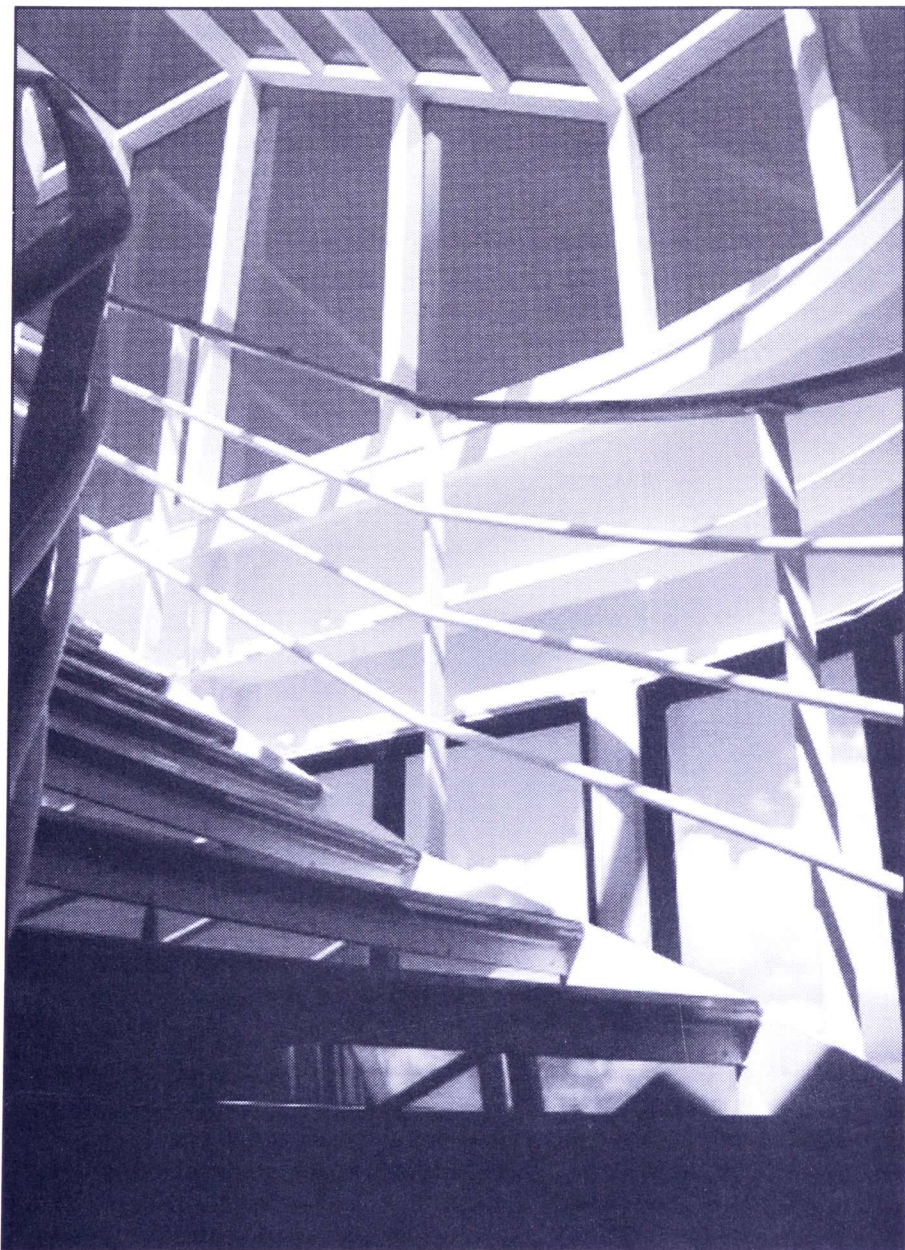
But why's our time so limited?
There's so much here we wish to do
Why can't we live forever more?
Why must He make room for the New?

The Reaper plays amongst the snow
Catching stray flakes on rotted tongue
Where they melt to the after-life
To hear the nameless songs unsung

What is our purpose here on earth?
Just to be born only to die?
Or is humanity more than
Snow falling past the Reaper's eye?

Up

Danielle Melissovas Thompson



Start Pushing

Sydney Lanier

I have issues with sex. I always have. I figured we might as well get that out in the open if we're going to do this. I don't think it's my fault; it's just how I am. I'm one of those "okay, so if we're going to do this, let's turn off the lights" kind of girls, you know?

I don't really blame anyone for my issues, though several people made me the way I am.

I was five when my grandmother's neighbor's son pulled down his pants to show me what he was packing. He was six and I didn't know what to expect, so I wasn't impressed. I just stood there, staring at the no-no place, wondering why anyone would want that. I remember thinking it seemed like it would get in the way.

"Look. I can hold onto it if I get bored." He illustrated the point, though I didn't see what was so fascinating with it. I just shrugged. He made a nasty face and yanked his tiny cargo pants back up around his waist and fastened the Velcro. He had wanted me to play "I'll show you mine if you show me yours," but I didn't have any interest in seeing his so I never actually offered to show mine.

Two days later, his mother came pounding on our front door, yelling at my mum about her hussy daughter. I had no idea what that meant but I knew the yelling and subsequent interrogation (I was acquitted) meant it was nothing good. While I knew that I didn't do anything, this first experience with a phallus was enough to convince me that I never wanted to see another for at least ten years.

My first two weeks of middle school were torturous. Whose wasn't, honestly? We had just moved to a new town so I didn't know anybody and was the type of kid that "didn't wanna know anybody." Homeroom was particularly excruciating. At least in the regular classes I could pretend to be absorbed in whatever book or handout we had been given, but homeroom was a perfect waste of a half-hour where I actually had to talk to other kids.

This one guy, Mark, was making efforts to become the "class clown" early this year. Most of his jokes were things that I had heard on TV the night before. I guess he was banking on someone not watching the same programs as he and his family did. There were a few that were original to me, though; one about some rabbits not being able to find enough food for their babies and one about this guy that went skydiving without underwear.

But, the one joke that stands out to me the most was the first joke I real-

ized was dirty and I didn't know what it meant. I don't remember the whole set-up

—you'll have to forgive me—but the punch line had something to do with two starving whales tipping over a boat and the female refusing to consume the overboard sailors. Lots of people laughed (me included), but I'm not sure that any of us got the joke. I'm not entirely sure Mark understood the joke either.

To be honest, most of my friends in high school were sluts. They didn't seem to care that I was a virgin and wasn't wanting to hump every football player that came my way, so we got along. I got to hear all their gossip, live vicariously through their escapades, and not have to run crying to the clinic after each heartbreak. To me, it was the best of both worlds.

That's not to say that I wasn't interested in guys. I just wasn't interested in high school guys. I “tried on” a few of my classmates, but they were all dumb and immature and . . . basically, exactly like me but not as judgmental. I had this dream of what guys outside the high school were like. Obviously, they were sensitive, caring, funny, and intelligent.

I never got the chance to meet any of these illustrious older guys while in high school. Every party or magical blind date pool of non-high school boys I had access to must have stocked the bottom of the barrel. I didn't meet a single one that knocked my socks off. Most of them were college drop-outs, burger flippers, or total heshers. Not exactly my dream come true.

My mother didn't help with these types of things for me either. It was a general rule at my house that sex didn't exist. Any sexual joke or insinuation made on TV was met with a blank stare from all members of the family. No matter how funny or stupid a sitcom was, no response was the proper response.

The closest thing to a the-birds-and-the-bees talk I ever got was one awkward afternoon while I was doing calculus homework. Leaning against the door frame, she mumbled, “So, I hear Ashley's pregnant.”

“Yup.”

“She's kind of skanky, isn't she? I never realized it.”

“Yup. She hides it well.”

“You know, you should wait.”

And then she walked away. I sat, staring at the empty doorway, confused as to what had just happened. I was a little surprised that I didn't get the “guilty by association” talk, where she would naturally assume that I was bon-

ing the kid that mows our lawn (and his cousin), but also that I didn't get the "dangers of fornication" pamphlet I knew she was probably hiding in her bedside drawer.

It didn't occur to me until a few days later that that moment was her reaching out to me in her own way. That was her lowering herself to my level, talking about one of my friends without being completely condemning. This was big.

It still wasn't quite the sex talk I was expecting. I suppose after-school specials and the horror stories my friends came to school with built it up for something that just wasn't going to happen in my family. My mother wasn't exactly the "Let's talk about STDs" type of person. However, this one comment about skanky pregnant Ashley was her way of giving me credit. She knew I wasn't stupid, she knew I was aware of the existence of sex; it wasn't something we needed to talk about.

It also breached the wall that stood between my family and the idea of sex. This was incredibly short-lived, but I was interested to see the possible results. I waited until we were all watching TV together again. There it was, the first penis joke of the episode . . . blank stares. Nothing had really changed.

I know I'm probably not making any sense. I'm sorry for that. I'm just trying to explain myself, you know?

Leaving for college changed everything for me. Me, the straight-A, straight-laced kid ran to the big city with big dreams. One of those dreams was that I would finally find one of those magical guys that would shake my foundations.

There he was. If not the knight in shining armour, he was at least an experiment. He wasn't a high school boy; he was older, more mature.

I would have him.

There were two extra-long twin bunks in that third floor dorm room. His was the bottom, gratefully the less squeaky of the two.

There was no discussion, just a long glance that said "Yes No? Maybe? Yes?" and it was understood. We were nervous, fumbling, shaking slightly, both entirely new at this. A simple motion, monotonous.

It didn't last long. It didn't change my world. Maybe I expected more.

After he collapsed on top of me, he rolled to lie beside me and pulled my head onto his chest. I pulled the covers up closer to my chin. His arm touch-

ing my side, he whispered, "You alright?"

"Yup." I curled up against him. I stayed with him for two more weeks after that. He must not have been one of those magical guys after all.

When I was nearly twenty, my mother found a condom in my boyfriend's car. I didn't know about this until three weeks later when she blew up at me on the phone about forgetting to go to the grocery store. I eventually just yelled, "What is going on?!" into the phone. That shut her up. But then there was the awkward silence. For a minute I didn't know if she had hung up on me or not. "I saw something in William's car . . ."

I knew exactly what she meant. A string of vulgarity flew through my mind; luckily none made it out. "It's my life!" was all I could say, despite how angsty-teenager it sounded. This time she did hang up.

A few days later I made the drive to their house for the confrontation. Somehow, those few days of cooling off brought my mother to a little more understanding. "It's your life," she sighed. "Just don't be stupid."

"I won't," I reassured her. It didn't reassure me, though. For the next year and a half I knew exactly how stupid I was being.

I knew it the moment it happened. There was a little twinge somewhere between my chest and my belly button. Suddenly I knew my life had much more importance, much more significance. Some people search forever for the meaning of life, but that's the moment that I discovered the meaning of sex.

I'm still not making sense, am I? Blame it on the drugs, that shot. Maybe I'm just a babbler. That's what my mother has always told me. I talk way too much.

I think they're coming stronger now. Maybe quicker. I have no real sense of time so maybe you should get me a clock or a stopwatch or something.

Anyway, so now you know why I think it's so weird that you'll be down there. I know you're not going to sexualize me; I'm not some object or some slut in a magazine. But it's going to be awkward for me. I just need you to know that. I have some issues.

Just let me know when to start pushing.

Contributors' Notes

Erika Adams

Erika is an Assistant Professor of Art. Her courses include Printmaking, Papermaking and Book Arts, Drawing and Two-Dimensional Design. *Forest Wrestlers* is wood veneer and xerox transfer on plywood.

Kristen M. Anthony

Kristen is a junior Communications major. *An Obsession with Numbers* is a nonfiction account of a personal struggle with an eating disorder and recovery; it is to encourage those who struggle or have struggled with an eating disorder. Life can and does truly go on.

Amanda M. Averett

Amanda is a senior Secondary English Education major. *The Water Boils* is a work of poetry inspired by watching a pot of water, waiting on it to boil; the beauty is that it never does boil when anyone is watching. *Untitled* is a work of poetry inspired by Walt Whitman's "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry." *You Can't Sleep through Every Storm* is a work of poetry about the reality that sometimes conflict is inevitable and often necessary, no matter how tragic.

Obadiah Booker

Obadiah is a senior English Literature major. *Father's Hands* is a work of poetry about his father, their minimal relationship and possible feelings when his father dies. *Cleaning House Months After You Left* is a work of poetry inspired by William Carlos Williams statement, "there is no idea but in things."

Les Cuebas

Les is a junior Fine Arts major. *T.R.III* is an intaglio and aquatint print based on a series of photographs. Compositions are created first through the camera lens, and then the images are used as sketches for his works.

April Dean

April is a junior Fine Arts major. *Ceramics Untitled*, made from stoneware, is a grouping of figures and props to illustrate a narrative. *Untitled* is an altered book; cut-outs used from the pages were sewn together with thread. The book's subject was marriage.

Brent DeBique

Brent is a senior English Professional Writing major. *God Through a Sea of This and That* is a work of poetry.

Franklin Lee Dillard II

Frank is a senior Fine Arts major. His art confronts cultural metaphysics. *Celestial Harmonies* is an acrylic wash painting on canvas. *Death of Judas* is an intaglio etching. *Gatekeeper* is a woodblock print. *The Web We Wove* is a mixed media drawing.

Lacey Nicole Ferguson

Lacey is a sophomore Art Education major. *Untitled* is a painting about formal elements and personal expression.

Adam Forrester

Adam is a senior Fine Arts major. *Opelika* is a cibachrome print. *Shibuya* and *Tokyo* are gelatin-silver prints.

Joseph Francavilla

Joseph is an Associate Professor of English. His courses include American Literature and Film. *In Mad King Ludwig's Castle* is a work of poetry inspired by a trip to Germany when he saw King Ludwig of Bavaria's Neuschwanstein Castle.

Jackie Frankovich

Jackie is a sophomore Political Science major. *War* is a work of poetry inspired by the horrific and cruel consequences produced by any and all armed conflicts. It is a reminder that any war trembles the foundations of humanity itself.

Melanie K. Greenwood

Melanie is a senior English Literature major. *On Sand and Asphalt* is short fiction inspired by Ernest Hemmingway's *In Our Time* and the innocence of children at recess amongst unaware adults. *Revive My Old Affection* is short fiction inspired by John Cheever's "Reunion" and the inevitable loss of friendship as a result of separating paths. *Snow Day* and *Step Right Up* are black and white photographs printed on matte resin paper.

Charlene Hatch

Charlene is a post-baccalaureate student. *Walkway Down* is a work of photography.

Lori Hinkley

Lori is a senior English Literature major. *The Man of the House* is a nonfiction account of her husband leaving for Iraq in 2003. *Cul-de-sac* is a work of poetry inspired by real events. *Newborn* is a work of poetry that describes the first days of motherhood. *Thoughts of the Unwants: Those Who Are Never Born* is a work of poetry, one of those that just come to you.

Christen Anne Holloway

Christen is a Fine Arts major. *Collectibles* is a photograph taken at Pat's Antique Store on 2nd Avenue in Columbus, GA.

Addie Hughes

Addie is a Fine Arts major. *Light Bulb* is a work of art.

Hannah Israel

Hannah is a Professor of Art. Her courses include Drawing and Sculpture. *Untitled* is a work of art.

Kelly Johnson

Kelly is a sophomore Fine Arts major. *Sapphire* is a digital painting and the first in a series of gemstone-themed pieces. *Mad Hatter* is a digital painting inspired by Linda Bergkvist's "Ladies of London."

Neal Jordan

Neal is a junior Fine Arts major. *Evolution* is a charcoal rendition of Wharhol's "Before and After."

Amanda Kite

Amanda is a junior English Literature major. *Pilgrimage* is a work of poetry.

Cassandra Lagmay

Cassandra is a Fine Arts major. *Downtown* is a photographic print exposed through tissue paper. *Etching* and *Etching* are etchings.

Sydney Lanier

Sydney is a senior English Literature major. *Slat Boats* was photographed in Tübingen, Germany on a rainy day in the university town. *Just a Formality* is a piece of short fiction written in response to the hypocrisy in all of us. *Start Pushing* is a piece of short fiction written as an experiment in voice.

Sondra Lee

Sondra is a junior. *Taste This Apple So Unfairly Cut* is a work of poetry inspired by René Magritte's "The Listening Room."

Jessica R. McCallister

Jessica is a senior English Professional Writing major. *Success* is short fiction inspired by film noirs of the forties. *The Rosary Egg* is a nonfiction contemplation of her spirituality.

Rushton Elliott McHugh

Elliott is a junior Fine Arts major. *Rondal* is watercolor and ink, inspired by director David Lynch and friend, Ron Scott.

Gretchen Nevins

Gretchen is a part-time Writing Instructor. Her courses include English Composition 1, English Composition 2 and World Literature 2. *The Cat Man* is a work of poetry inspired by the real Cat Man who resides up North and tends to his feline compatriots twice daily.

Willie Pace

Willie is a senior English Literature major. His poetry, "An Ancient Ritual" and "Where is the Key?" are inspired by *Les Miserable* by Victor Hugo for heartfelt passion and by *Canterbury Tales* by Geoffrey Chaucer for subtle nuances and cultural issues.

John Phillips

John is a junior Music major. *A Shadow on the Water* is based on folklore from Jekyll Island. *Eyes Like Broken Icicles* is a sentimental poetic still-life about the lost battles of life. *Freud in the Fun Park* is a recognition of the possibility of hell through the convenient metaphor of Freud.

Kevin Ramirez

Kevin is a junior Secondary English Education major, English Professional Writing minor. *Amor de la Lengua* is a work of poetry experimenting with language to explore the differences between English and Spanish.

Jason Richardson

Jason is a freshman English major. *Wrong Place, Wrong Time* is a work of fiction inspired by the writing style of novelist Dean Koontz. *Johnny's Elegy* is a work of poetry inspired by pondering death.

Melanie Ross

Melanie is a senior Fine Arts major. *Prostitution, Menstruation, Pregnancy, and Abortion* use a variety of mediums and techniques for their effect.

Sarah Martha Shipman

Sarah is a freshman Fine Arts major. *Daniel-kinesis* is a work of poetry inspired by her significant other and other healthy romantic relationships.

John Shelly Summerfield Jr.

John is a part-time Writing Instructor. His courses include English Composition 1 and English Composition 2. *Dawn's* is a work of poetry inspired by dawn's early light. It belongs to a compilation of poetry about nature and his childhood river in John's first book of poetry, *I, Suwannee*, expected out in April 2007.

Bridgette Temmis

Bridgette is a senior English Professional Writing major. *This Morning I Open the Blinds* is an aubade written in response to a friend's work of poetry, "Caroline," in which he "shuts the blinds."

James Terrell

James is a junior English Literature major. *Villanelle for New Orleans* is a work of poetry.

Danielle Melissovas Thompson

Danielle is a freshman English Professional Writing major. *Up*, a digital photograph taken on board a ship, is an image of optimism and hope: shadows below; bright, clear skies above.

Denis Tricoche

Denis is a senior Communications major. *All the Silly Pig Wanted was a Haircut* is a color photograph taken in Borneo. *Class Dismissed* is a color photograph.

C. Edward Watkins

Charles is a senior English Literature major. *Fade to Black* is a work of poetry which comments on the death penalty, giving the reader the option of "flipping the switch" after full disclosure of the facts leading to the moment of execution. *Persistent Devil, Aren't You?* is a work of poetry addressing the inner turmoil we all face when staring at our own mortality. *The Truth Is...* is a work of poetry expressing frustration about the permeation of drugs into neighborhoods and cultures already crippled by poverty, apathy and other socio-economic conditions.

Orion Wertz

Orion is an Assistant Professor of Art. His courses include Painting and Drawing. He uses illustration to respond to daily experiences: short and simple is best where some things are concerned.

Shannon Williamson

Shannon is a junior English Literature major. *Mother of Perfected Rhythm* is a work of poetry inspired by imagining a memory ending differently than it did in reality.

Selections for publication in Arden are made by a staff of CSU students and led by two faculty advisors.

All submissions are judged blindly, without regard to name, race, gender, or status as faculty, staff or student. Editors are not given any identifying information with the works before all final decisions are made.

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